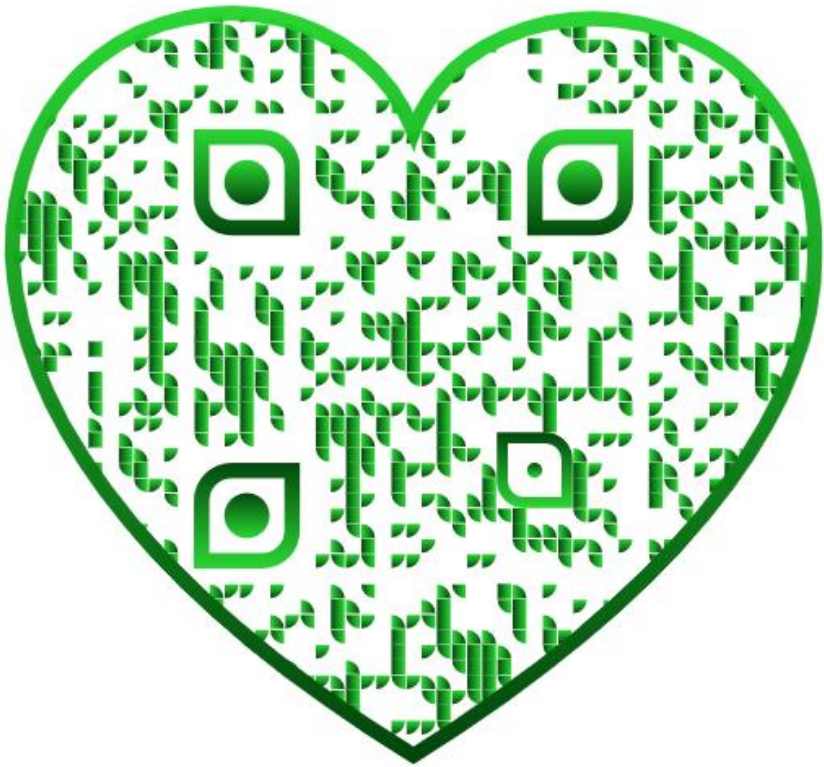
AGHORA

BOOK I

AT THE LEFT HAND OF GOD

ROBERT E. SVOBODA



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ALSO BY **ROBERT E. SVOBODA**

The Hidden Secret of Ayurveda
1st Edition Bombay 1980, 2nd Edition The Ayurvedic Press, Albuquerque, 1994
Prakriti: Your Ayurvedic Constitution
1st Edition Geocom, Albuquerque, 1988, 2nd Edition Sadhana Publications, 1999
Ayurveda: Life, Health and Longevity
1st Edition Penguin Books, London, 1992; reprinted by The Ayurvedic Press, Albuquerque, 2004.
Tao and Dharma
(with coauthor Arnie Lade) Lotus Press, 1995
Ayurveda for Women,
David & Charles Publishers, Newton Abbot, 1999
Aghora II: Kundalini
Nāmarūpa LLC, Dublin, New Hampshire, 2019
Aghora III: The Law of Karma
Nāmarūpa LLC, Dublin, New Hampshire, 2019
Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India,
(with coauthor Hart de Fouw) Penguin Books, London, 1996
The Greatness of Saturn: A Therapeutic Myth
Sadhana Publications, 1997
Light on Relationships: The Synastry of Indian Astrology,
(with coauthor Hart de Fouw) Samuel Weiser Inc., 2000
The Ayurvedic Home Study Course,
The Ayurvedic Institute, Albuquerque, 1985
Vāstu, Breathing Life Into Space
Nāmarūpa LLC, Dublin, New Hampshire, 2013
Living with Reality, Wisdom from the Aghori Vimalananda
(with Paula Crossfield, Editor and Satya Moses, Illustrator)
Nāmarūpa LLC, Dublin, New Hampshire, 2013
Advisor *Nāmarūpa, Categories of Indian Thought*

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BOOK I
AT THE LEFT HAND OF GOD

ROBERT E. SVOBODA

FOREWORD BY DR. FREDERICK M. SMITH

NĀMARŪPA, LLC, *Publishers*

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As this and the other two volumes of this trilogy have repeatedly been and continue to be found available for free download on the Internet, I feel obliged to state that it was Vimalananda's express wish that a substantial portion of the income from this trilogy be delivered to certain of his impecunious spiritual children to assist them to defray their living expenses. Accordingly, anyone who posts these works on the Internet and makes them available for free reading or download and anyone who avails of such postings is incurring a debt to Vimalananda that s/he is then wholly responsible for paying back. You have been warned.

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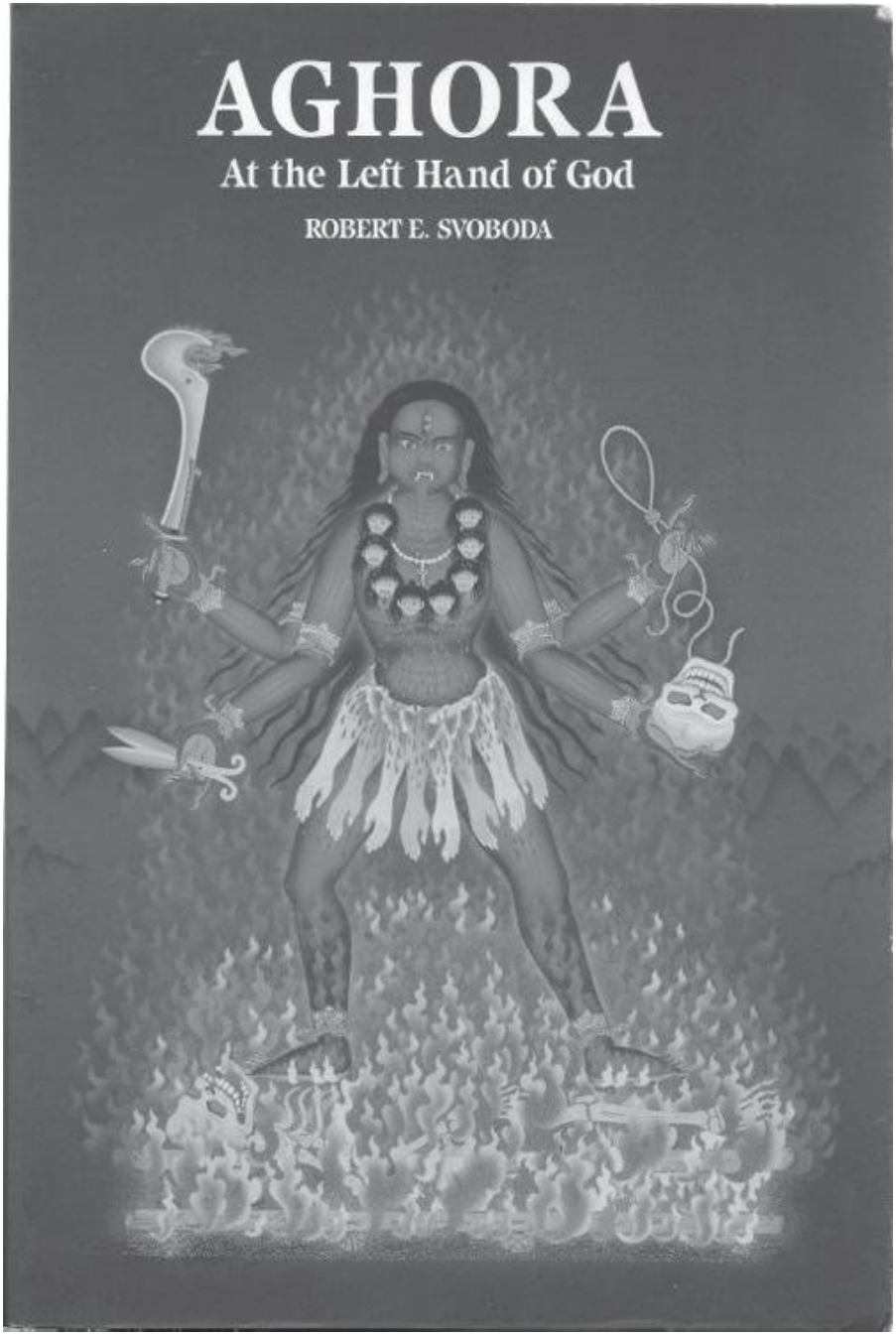

Original cover art by Robert Beer

VIMALANANDA'S DEDICATION FOR THIS BOOK

Dedicated to One who is the source of life
The Dynamic Cosmic Energy
which pervades the entire universe perennially
The fountainhead of supreme joy, divinity, and magnanimity:

MY MOTHER TARA

VIMALANANDA, the subject of this book, designed the original cover to encapsulate its contents: the breadth, the power, the majesty and the divine delirium of Aghora. He dictated to the author the following regarding its symbolic meaning:

"*Ghora* is darkness, the darkness of ignorance. *Aghora* means light, the absence of darkness. Under the Tree of Knowledge is an *aghori*, a follower of the path of Aghora. He has gone beyond ignorance thanks to the Flame of Knowledge which billows from the funeral pyre. The funeral pyre is the ultimate reality, a continual reminder that everyone has to die. Knowledge of the ultimate reality of Death has taken the aghori beyond the Eight Snares of Existence: lust, anger, greed, delusion, envy, shame, disgust and fear which bind all beings. The aghori plays with a human skull, astonished by the uselessness of limited existence, knowing the whole world to be within him though he is not in the world. His spiritual practices have awakened within him the power of Kundalini, which takes the form of the goddess dancing on the funeral pyre: Smashan Tara. He is bewildered to think that all is within him, not external to him; that he sees it not with the physical eyes but with the sense of perception. The Flame of Knowledge is that which preserves life, the Eternal Flame, the Supreme Ego, the Motherhood of God which creates the whole Maya of the universe and thanks only to Whose grace the aghori has become immortal."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LIKE ANY MATURE INDIVIDUAL, this book and its two fellows are the product of abundant focused attention and the coordinated efforts of many individuals over many years. I would like to first thank my parents, Laura and Edwin Svoboda, who always supported my endeavors even when (as was the case with this trilogy) they found the products of those endeavors difficult to comprehend.

Thanks are due for both editions of this book to Dr. Frederick M. Smith, whose repeated meetings with Vimalananda provided invaluable perspective as I organized the first edition and who has kindly provided the Foreword to the second edition.

Kudos to *Nāmarūpa*, for whose magazine I have served as advisor since its first appearance in 2003, and which has now taken over the publication of the *Aghora* books.

To adopted nephew Satya Moses, whose company I have enjoyed since his infancy, a big thumbs up for creating coordinated covers, front and back, for all three volumes of this second edition.

Grateful pranams to the entire Moses family, led by Robert (who, with co-publisher Eddie Stern, publishes *Nāmarūpa*) and Meenakshi (his wife, helpmeet and co-editor), who have for more than two decades repeatedly rearranged their lives to welcome me into their home as an honorary member of the family, and whose assorted editorial contributions to my various writings have always improved them.

Profound appreciation to Paula Crossfield, who unremittingly directed the labors needed to transform a vague idea to republish into the work that you now hold in your hands, and without whose determination and prompting the second edition of these books might never have appeared.

Reverence to Jatalasadhu Sri Ram Vishvambhardas Ji, our Guru Maharaj: tasmai sri gurave namah!

Greatest thanks of all to Vimalananda, whose chronicles would never have been compiled without his unstinting cooperation and blessing.

FOREWORD

MY MEETINGS WITH THE AGHORI VIMALANANDA

I MET THE AGHORI VIMALANANDA in 1979 through Robert Svoboda, whom I had known since he arrived in Pune in 1974. He was then a first-year student at the Tilak Ayurveda College in a dense downtown neighborhood of Pune called Rasta Peth, and I was an MA student at the Centre for Advanced Study in Sanskrit at Poona University. I left Pune for the US in 1977. When I returned to Pune towards the end of 1979 it was on a grant from the American Institute of Indian Studies for PhD dissertation research on Vedic ritual in Poona and Madras (to use the spelling and names for what are today Pune and Chennai). Robert introduced me to Vimalananda immediately upon my return to India, and despite my time-consuming commitments in various parts of India, I managed to spend virtually all my free time with Vimalananda in Poona and Bombay for the next three years. I left India to return to Philadelphia, where I completed my PhD at the University of Pennsylvania, in 1982, a bit more than a year before Vimalananda died in December 1983 at the age of 67.

Spending appreciable amounts of time with Vimalananda was one of the great gifts of my life. I saw him most often at the flat in the southern part of Bombay where he was living and in Poona, where he, as an owner of racehorses, stayed for much of the four-month period during and after the monsoon, when the Bombay races shifted from the torrential rains and sweltering climate of Bombay to the more salubrious clime of Poona. He would stay in a somewhat rundown lodge called the Hotel Radhika in a slightly seedy part of Poona, near Quartergate, because, as he explained it, he was in contact with a helpful spirit that lived in a tree behind the hotel, with whom he had a positive karmic debt, or *rnanubandhana*. No one but he ever quite knew the exact nature of his relationships with extra-dimensional beings, except that many of us felt intuitively that he was on a palpable first name basis with such beings, and that none of us were ever as autonomous in our agency as we would usually like to believe. There was never a dull moment.

In addition to his flat in Bombay and the hotel in Poona, I several times went to the racetrack with him in Bombay and Poona (this part of Vimalananda's life occupies the third volume of the *Aghora* trilogy), and accompanied him on many excursions, for example on

Mahashivaratri, the night before the new moon between mid-February and early March, when he would perform a *homa* or havan, a fire ritual, a few kilometers from the town of Alandi, which is about 20 km from Poona. The great Maharashtrian saint Jnaneshwar was interred alive in Alandi in the year 1296 and is believed to still be sitting in deep meditation beneath a tree there.

Also, importantly for me, I met his teacher identified in this book as Junior Guru Maharaj, in Simhachalam, near Visakhapatnam in coastal Andhra Pradesh, on my way back to Poona from a trip to Calcutta. I returned to visit Guru Maharaj many times over the next decade or so. Here is just one story from my time with Guru Maharaj. I was there with Robert then, and Guru Maharaj asked Robert to give him a massage. He said that he had a pain on his sternum. Guru Maharaj was reputed to be several centuries old, a story I never doubted given that I never saw him eat at all except a veritable thimble full of milk every morning and a tiny quantity of chewing tobacco, which he placed under his little fingernail on his right hand and swallowed whole. Given his advanced age and the impressive size of the xiphoid process of his sternum, which like all cartilage in the body continues to grow as we age, Robert, by then a fully trained Ayurvedic doctor, asked Guru Maharaj the simple question, “How long have you had this pain?” He replied, “At least a hundred years.” Robert then asked, “Does this make it acute or chronic?”

Many of our valuable days and hours with Vimalananda were occupied in his storytelling. Vimalananda was one of the smartest and most versatile of humans, the product of Western education at the highest levels in Bombay, extensive experience in the business and horseracing worlds, and deep involvement in Tantrik arts, astrology, and medicine, both biomedical and Ayurvedic. He was, in addition, one of the best cooks and conversationalists that one could ever hope to meet. Consistent with his many other capabilities, he was one of the most entrancing storytellers that I have ever come across. Every moment was riveting, whether lounging around his small apartment or dining at an opulent Gujarati restaurant, or when he held court in his Poona hotel room. Except in public, and perhaps there as well, he could fall under the power of other personalities known historically or mythically. When Vimalananda would become overwhelmed, or possessed, by one of these other figures, the stakes were raised considerably. It was always clear that he was one or two steps ahead of us, but in such a condition the power, energy, and teaching became much more intense. Virtually every moment with Vimalananda was a teaching moment, whether it was when he would assume the guise of Hanuman or if he was sitting in his apartment with a shot of Black Dog scotch. Vimalananda was always the master of ceremonies in his

own element, and not infrequently his eyes would change color, his back would stiffen, he would, less frequently but often importantly, place a flowing red turban on his head, and allow other voices to speak through him. If he did not place the turban on his head, no one except his close inner circle knew he was in a phase of inner transformation, as described in the book. One always had to be on one's toes, always maintain maximum alertness around Vimalananda. On such occasions you would feel, even know, that he was speaking to you and you alone, conveying an important life or spiritual message to you, even if many people in the room felt the same thing.

His narratives became his life as much as his life became and manifested his narratives and stories. He could tell ostensibly the same story fifty times—for example, the lead story in Chapter 1 in this book. But every telling was executed slightly differently and represented a fresh teaching every time. We might have heard the same story fifty times, but every experience of it was different. His stories, whatever might be their facticity or believability as ontological events, were invariably teaching moments, and we had to be constantly on our toes to pick up on what he was trying to convey to us. No retelling ever carried the same emphasis, weight, or message. Thus, no matter how often Vimalananda would tell what seemed like the same story, he never, in fact, told the same story twice.

When reading this book, then, you are advised to visualize yourself in a small room with perhaps five to ten people in it, usually the smaller end of that scale, with the regal and articulate figure of Vimalananda sitting cross-legged, with his right foot easily draped over his left thigh, with his left foot tucked beneath him, smoking a cigarette. He would be dressed in ordinary pants, or a dhoti, with an ordinary Western-style shirt. During his later years, at least at home in Bombay or in the hotel in Poona, he would have with him his beloved Pekingese named Lizoo, on whom he would lavish affection. Sometimes Lizoo would be in his lap, sometimes sleeping on the floor next to him. The only time I saw Vimalananda in a state of genuine dejection was the day Lizoo died in 1982, at the advanced age of 15 or 16.

Vimalananda was (almost) invariably polite and well-mannered, even around people he did not particularly like. He would save his reservations until later, then let you know how he was able to pick up on a person's insincerity or disingenuousness. It might be based on physiognomy or gait or omens or the position of the stars; he was always aware of broader perspectives. Although he never once advertised his abilities, people would come to his place constantly, hoping for, even expecting, a boon, a cure, a positive business deal, an

arranged marriage, success in an examination, and so on. He was well controlled physically, to some extent due to his past as a wrestler, to some extent due to his control of *prana* or life force, despite his smoking habit, which eventually gave him emphysema and heart problems, shortening his lifespan. Part of his self-control was his uncompromising fidelity around women. Spiritually, he came out of an orbit of Tantrik practice (*sadhana*) and ethos. He could speak the macho and competitive language that one commonly finds in Indian spiritual circles, especially in circles influenced by Tantrik and Nath yogis of North India, but in practice he was invariably soft and deferential to women, without being unctuous or solicitous. To him the Goddess, Ma, in all her multiforms and guises, was supreme and manifested in all women, and he took it upon himself, as perhaps his supreme spiritual practice, to create within himself the body and spirit of the Goddess. As such, what might appear to some as a macho or even slightly misogynist attitude was a part of loose-talking yogic culture that was never very deeply etched into him. His ideal yogi was the great nineteenth century Bengali mystic Ramakrishna Paramahansa, because Ramakrishna was fully capable of manifesting and expressing the fundamental experience of all religions. The teachers to whom he gave offerings daily were his Junior Guru Maharaj and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and the deity he served every day in his house was Hanuman, although to be sure he worshiped the inner Goddess constantly. He would be appalled by the present-day ascent of Hindutva, because his values were decidedly universal. He saw truth where it was, not where it was ideologically situated. And where was this truth? It was not just potentially everywhere, it was in fact everywhere. Certain identifiable densities could be identified, such as at the *mahasamadhi* of Jnaneshwar at Alandi, or in the figure of Hanuman, or in the goddess Tara of the cremation grounds, Smashan Tara, as described in the book, or in the image of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, or in the figure of that most perfect of animals, the horse.

Finally, it must be said that adding up all of this, Vimalananda was simply good company (the literal meaning of *satsanga*). It was easy to forgive him his cigarettes and whiskey and consumption of other substances we conveniently (and correctly) label as poison. He told me one day that he had ingested small quantities of aconite every day for thirty-five years. No doubt, it had a Tantrik purpose to it, just as we read in this book that certain well-known yogis were able to consume and pass through their bodies shocking amounts of mercury. I asked Vimalananda if he experienced any negative long-term effects of his daily dose of aconite. He placed two fingers of his right hand on his teeth and said, “The teeth are a little loose.” This is the kind of

familiarity and ease that one could establish with Vimalananda; he was friend, mentor, guide, cook, doctor, conversation partner, always willing to teach and to learn, ready to joke and to be honest, ready to show you, and even demonstrate, the hidden treasures of Indian spirituality that were in front of you but that you would not see but for him pointing them out, ready to take you on an adventure, ready to point out to you the magic of life that was immeasurably closer than one ever knew.

Frederick M. Smith
Iowa City, IA, USA
Aksayya trtiya - April 18, 2018

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

DEATH IS THE SOLE guaranteed prospect for every living being, but those humans who survive into their declining years are also promised a further shared experience: a cellular-level understanding of what living in aging flesh really encompasses. When, younger, I was informed by elders of just how markedly life after age fifty differs from life before, the confidence of youth assured me that I knew what they meant, and it was only after I had myself passed the half-century mark that I realized just how mistaken I had been.

More than just slowing reflexes, waning sensory acuity, and annoying aches and pains on the downside and with maturity and wisdom as potential upsides, age offers invaluable and otherwise unobtainable benefits in continuity and perspective. Reality is always shifting, and life always adapting to those the shifts. Organisms that live through and survive noteworthy events learn at a physiological level that they can survive if they will but continue to adapt.

In many ways modern life is clearly easier to negotiate today than it was even in my 1950s childhood, and during my initial stint in India in the 1970s; it is far easier than a century ago, when indoor plumbing was still a rarity, refrigeration usually consisted of a box filled with ice, air travel was in its infancy, and medicine still languished in the pre-antibiotic era. And so, when those junior to me wring their hands over the world situation today I sometimes find it difficult not to smile, as they are living in a time when in many ways conditions are far better than they have ever been.

Other modern circumstances (e.g. overcrowding, pervasive pollution, and a generalized decline in both personal and shared values and discipline) however are worse than in the past. Vimalananda's own father maintained that his son would never enjoy the same richness of life (in general, in India, in Bombay) that he had enjoyed, and Vimalananda assured me likewise. Now it is I who am obliged to convey this truth to others, including young Indians who can only imagine what it might have been like, for example, to be able to spend time alone (as I did) in the inner sancta of several of that country's greatest temples, with no one pestering you for money (or selfies). Many of the locales and shrines that I visited with Vimalananda are now permanently changed, some altered almost beyond recognition; all are less tranquil and more commercial than they were before. We who are less young have lived through times

that no one will ever live through again.

What then of someone who lived far longer, through far more vicissitudes than any of us today, far longer than the span of the four generations since Vimalananda's grandfather would have instructed his own son in this matter, at least a century ago? That someone was our Guru Maharaj (which is what those of us who knew him personally called him; in these books he is known as Vimalananda's "Junior Guru Maharaj"). What species of cognition might it have been for him to first live a century or two (or three), then go into samadhi for untold years before being 'discovered', reanimated, and thrust precipitously into the world of A.D. 1905, to witness in person the spectacular changes that transpired in the 88 years between that date and his relinquishing of his body in 1993?

Junior Guru Maharaj was supremely fortunate in many things, and possibly most fortunate in meeting his own guru (referred to in these books as "Senior Guru Maharaj") both before entering and after emerging from samadhi. What a blessing it must have been for him to be able to "compare notes" (as Vimalananda liked to put it) with someone even older than he, and that too his own mentor, at a moment when he had perforce to learn again how best to interact with everyday people.

But even the life of Junior Guru Maharaj (and perhaps that of Senior Guru Maharaj as well, though no one I know knows what has become of him since he last visited Vimalananda in the 1960s) did come to an end, and though the rest of us cannot hope to live as long as he did we can all take his advice (and that of his guru, and of Vimalananda) to heart and embrace the undeniable reality that the most critical moment of life is the moment of death, a moment that we should without fail remember daily, particularly as with increasing years that moment makes a closer approach.

Being present at Vimalananda's death was an extreme teaching moment, the culmination of all the lessons he taught me in the eight and a quarter years that I was privileged to know him. It has been those lessons that have chiefly directed the course of my life in the more than three decades since, helping me navigate my activities, structure my relationships, and generally follow the path laid out for me by my karmas according to his repeated recommendations to pay attention to rnanubandhana, the bondage of karmic debt.

Of his many instructions the one that I have had to repeatedly re-learn is his warning never to slacken, to "rest on one's laurels"; never to imagine that any end exists to self-refinement, particularly when it comes to removing those limitations that keep us from being able to properly love. God is Love, and to sit near Vimalananda was to enter a field of love fed by his fondness for his beloved deities, for certain of

the other ethereal beings who gathered round him, for his cherished "children", and most of all for his animals who, as he never tired of saying, love more sincerely and more purely than humans can.

Vimalananda never equated love with sentimentality, and sometimes took actions that might seem to some callous rather than compassionate, as for example in the context of Jina Chandra Suri after that ascetic had introduced him to sadhana in the cremation grounds (see Chapter One). As valuable as that experience was for Vimalananda, he was inveigled into it under false pretenses, and despite maintaining a connection with Jina Chandra Suri thereafter, refrained from intervening when that karma of deception rebounded onto that ascetic. Though in my experience Vimalananda could be hard with anyone (including, of course, me), in my experience compassion and love could always be detected beneath the toughness.

Though he spoke much of ritual, and of the performance of rituals for specific goals, he always maintained the superiority of *nishkama* to *kamya* karma, of actions performed without intending any specific result versus actions performed to achieve a desired goal. While it is true that ritual procedures implemented with a target in mind generally do need to be technically perfect in their performance if they are to succeed, for him the real magic in life was the achievement of a powerful *bhava*, or emotional state; he always valued emotion over ambition, juicy bhakti over dry jnana. When instructing his spiritual "children" in some ceremony, he expected them to perform it with strong focus on doing it 'rightly', so long as that focus did not impede their ability to do it 'genuinely', with a heart full of devotion for the deity.

Vimalananda's love was perhaps his greatest teaching for me, for the best of teachers teach chiefly by example, and his ability to extend love to everything and everyone, even those who considered him their enemy, provided both inspiration and an urgent and ongoing commission to me. His watchword was, "No matter how naughty a child is, its parents always love it," and on the several occasions that I became that naughty, disobedient child his love for me never faltered no matter how irate he became.

It was not long before he left his body that Vimalananda introduced me to Guru Maharaj, a being also filled with love, love that manifested through him rather differently, both because of his extreme age and of the world age in which he came to maturity and performed his own sadhanas. Guru Maharaj would speak of spirituality only on rare occasions, and then only at moments when he seemed momentarily to forget himself. For this reason, many people accused him of being miserly with his wisdom, when he simply recognized how unlikely it was for people to grasp the true meaning

of what he had to say, chiefly because his life was so drastically unlike the lives of the rest of us mortals who simply cannot keep our bodies breathing and functional for such an extraordinarily lengthy time.

For an example of just how distinct was his physiology, consider that on many occasions when visiting with Guru Maharaj (and I did so at least once annually for a full decade) I would watch him take a large leaf of cured tobacco, tear it into strips, and then slowly chew and meditatively swallow each strip. This procedure both astonished and fascinated me, knowing as I did just how poisonous, and emetic, that plant is. One day when I was thinking such thoughts more loudly than usual, Guru Maharaj, who knew what everyone around him was thinking at every moment, suddenly said to me, in his archaic Hindi: "What is the use of eating? You wear out your teeth and your digestive organs, and there are so many diseases that you can pick up from your food. Better it is to find a deadly poisonous substance and, when you consume it, use internal alchemy to transform it into nectar." I could not but agree.

Because he knew both me and Guru Maharaj well, Vimalananda knew that there was little of a practical nature that I would be able to learn from Guru Maharaj, whose philosophy of teaching involved having his pupils perform stringent penances well beyond my capabilities. He sent me there mainly to have Guru Maharaj bless me, and for me to be inspired by Guru Maharaj's example, however unlikely it was that I would be able to imitate it. By doing so he was also able to emphasize, after his own demise, just how unusual it was for someone of Vimalananda's know-how to teach those who lacked his abilities. To do so, Vimalananda willingly played the part of a more ordinary human, eating and drinking, interacting with the world in a relatively 'normal' way, thereby allowing those of us that he drew to himself to relate to him more naturally than if he had allowed himself to exist as he could have thanks to his achievements.

Despite this willingness to be open to others, Vimalananda never organized or codified his knowledge in any 'logical' fashion; what came from his mouth was inspired by the time and place of the moment, and by his listeners. As such I feel that I must emphasize the effort that has gone into the arranging of his words into this book, not to congratulate myself (and Dr. Fred Smith, who was my chief collaborator on this arrangement, and who has contributed a foreword to this second edition) on succeeding, but to underline how difficult Vimalananda could make it to follow threads of information from point A to point B. Under different circumstances the contents of this work might have been different and might have been ordered differently, producing quite another result.

With this in mind, I read through the book yet again, considering

what might require modification in a second edition, and came up with two substantial alterations. The first I had long considered: recasting the "Author's Postscript" at the end of Chapter Four into Vimalananda's words, as should have been the case from the beginning.

The second had nagged at me over the years but only now became clear and apparent: the shifting of roughly the first half of Chapter Ten to a position immediately following Chapter Four and renaming it Chapter Five; the renumbering of the following chapters; and the conversion of the last half of Chapter Ten into a Chapter Eleven. This revision makes the narrative better follow the rough timeline of his life that Vimalananda provided to me and makes, in my opinion, for a stronger conclusion.

Even with this adjustment I believe that the result continues to reflect who Vimalananda was and what he said and meant, and that it will still touch lives, as it has since its publication. Many (including me) still reread it and I am confident that, even in its rearranged state, the book will continue to be usable not only as a testimony to him and his life and an inspiration to genuine spiritual aspirants, but also as a divinatory tool. Since its first publication numerous individuals have testified to having successfully employed it thusly, opening it randomly to find that the passage on which their eyes alit would speak directly to them about whatever question they might then have been asking. I have myself often used it with similarly good results, and will continue to do so.

Not everyone, certainly, has attained to a similar alignment with this work. Though the substantial majority of those readers who have taken the time to comment have expressed gratitude for how much it has helped them, others have been so distressed by some of the more lurid details that they have found nothing of value in it. Some have simply been unable to understand it at all, or have misunderstood it, unconsciously or deliberately, like the benighted correspondent whose brief missive to me read, "Please immediately send the mantra for transforming alcohol."

Such an unfortunate would most likely have never had the courage to make this request directly to Vimalananda, but had he done so I can readily visualize the response: a scathing dissection of what was driving him to presume to know how to wield such a tool. And had this man dared to ask this question to Guru Maharaj, who did not approve of the consumption of strong drink at all, he would have surely received the retort that I saw the old man give to nine out of ten of those who came to his doorway requesting darshan: "Po, re!" (which is Telugu for, "Go, go on, git!"). Should the visitor continue to importune, Guru Maharaj would grab whatever was handy—a piece of

fruit, a coconut, a rock—and throw it at them. That would always get their attention, and off they would flee.

For Vimalananda, the spiritual path could be expressed in five words: "Carve out your own niche." But for him, carving out your own niche did not mean to fantasize that you can do something as a sadhana that is beyond your current capacity—such as consume alcohol. Your path to Reality is yours and yours alone; find it and walk it, but don't try to run. Life, mundane and spiritual alike, is a marathon, not a sprint, and trying to gallop before you can trot will at best wear you out. As Vimalananda often observed, "When you walk along a road, remember that the road will never get tired; it is you who will get tired." The message? Pace yourself.

To pace oneself requires self-control, and the beginning of self-control is to be able to limit oneself in a purposeful manner, whatever may be the purpose. Guru Maharaj was a being of extreme self-control. Before he became a tobacco-eater he used to smoke like a chimney, until the day that Vimalananda's wife complained that he was a bad influence on her husband, and how could he quit if his guru also smoked? The moment he heard this grievance, Guru Maharaj put away his smoking paraphernalia, and never smoked again. Later, when next he met Vimalananda's wife, he said to her, "Well? I gave up smoking, and your husband continues to. What do you have to say about that?" She had no reply.

This level of willpower being rare, both Vimalananda and Guru Maharaj rather encouraged intelligent self-restraint. Guru Maharaj, as usual, saw no need to dilate on the subject: "Shivaling ban jao!" he would say: "Become a Shiva linga!", i.e. make your awareness as firm, as uninterested in external conditions, as the rock that is worshiped as Shiva's symbol. Vimalananda, whose devotion to the Mother Goddess moved him to feel compassion for all beings, understood how difficult ruthless discipline is for common folk and instead suggested to searchers that they establish and maintain an appropriate *niyama*. A niyama, which the Sanskrit dictionary defines as "any act of voluntary penance or meritorious piety," is an agreement to restrict oneself in a particular fashion as a remedy (*upaya*) for some limitation that one's previous karmas are imposing upon one in the present. A niyama is a commitment to personal improvement, a pact you make with yourself and with God for your betterment. As Vimalananda would ask, "Who are you that God should do something good for you? Dedicate at least a little action specifically to God; that gives God an opening through which He can do something to benefit you."

It was thanks to Vimalananda that I began to observe various disciplines as niyamas. Some he suggested, some came from the suggestions of others, some I myself concocted, but all I have tried to

follow sincerely. Sometimes events have conspired to break my niyama; such breaks distressed me at first until I remembered Vimalananda's caution that obstructions will always arise when one tries to improve. The key to success at any niyama is to start now and keep going until you finish it; no matter how often you fall, keep picking yourself up to begin again.

Vimalananda always emphasized that it is natural for humans to make mistakes, and that no one can live a life free of them. What he repeatedly exhorted me to do was to make different mistakes each time. Success comes with simple practices repeated unswervingly every day; failure usually involves a few mistakes, daily repeated. Pronounced transformation can result from small positive recurring actions, particularly minor alterations in behavior that are not difficult to perform; and like the miracle of compound interest, I find it almost miraculous to see what changes have come over me thanks to decades of consistency in practice. Of course, I also see how much more I could have achieved had I been more focused and more dedicated, had I been able to overcome all the obstacles, internal and external, that came in my way; but then, one's spiritual path is actually composed of impediments, which we experience as hindrances because we have not yet learned to perceive them as boons.

It has moreover been my experience that life lessons get harder, not easier, as I go along. For instance, it has taken me decades to reduce my native irritability, and inevitably, just as I reach another plateau in non-irritability, a new peak to scale comes into view. Happily, I have the example of Eknath Maharaj[1] (recounted in *Aghora II: Kundalini*) to follow, and follow it I do, grumbling occasionally as my edges further soften.

Vimalananda believed that experience "gives the test before the lesson," and usually taught that way: engineering a situation, then quizzing me after on what I had gained from it. Only rarely did he directly instruct me to perform a specific action; usually he would instead give me hints and expect me to try them out and to figure out how to get them to work for me. Thanks to this, some of my own practices, including *homa* (ritual fire worship), differ significantly from his; it is my belief that he would have expected no less.

One unfortunate result of these books is that many people fancy that I have become like Vimalananda, or even that I have become him, or that he transferred all his siddhis to me; a few have even concluded that the entirety of this book is in my words instead of his. Several have importuned me to become their guru, though Vimalananda was loath to regard himself as a guru, never regarded me as a disciple (nor was I fit to be a disciple), and specifically instructed me never to initiate anyone as a disciple. He repeatedly

emphasized how difficult it is to find a good guru, and how much more difficult finding one would become, something that is sadly evident today as seekers desperate for guidance increase daily in number and charlatans catapult themselves into the limelight, often via the Internet. Why, for a few years, even Guru Maharaj had his own website, one that appears now to have disappeared from the realm of domains. Only vaguely can I guess at how he would have felt about being an online presence.

The reality is that, though thanks to Vimalananda I have indeed achieved some interesting things, I am but a pale imitation of who he was; and lest that sound like false modesty, it is something I am regularly reminded of. Though after many years of study and practice, I have become somewhat proficient at Ayurveda, Jyotisha, and a few other subjects, I am thoroughly aware that I am expert in none of them. It is easy for me to respect every genuine adept that I meet because I know personally just how much work an ordinary human being requires to gain mastery of any subject. That Vimalananda was proficient in these and related fields as well as in music and dance and cookery and yet other pursuits, and that he became so by expending only a fraction of the effort on their study that even gifted students have to expend in learning them—this was and is truly worthy of note, testifying as it does to both his determination to make the best of his aptitudes, and the great blessing from Ma that provided him those aptitudes, that determination, and those downloads of concentrated knowledge.

There was surely some manner of resonance with his internal reality that made it easier for me when in his presence to learn what I have been able to imbibe of these vidyas, and later made it easier for me to imbibe more from other specialists with whom I have experienced something similar, i.e. when in their presence my understanding and ability is significantly enhanced. For me this is a key confirmation of their expertise, a direct indication that they have become sufficiently transparent to their vidya that that vidya is able to shine through them with minimal obstruction.

Vimalananda was no doubt different than the ordinary adept in that he could deliver at least some of this effect at a distance, an effect that has continued for me even after his passing from this world. Having detected within me an ability to learn these disciplines, he used his own Shakti, and that of his deity, to reinforce both that ability and my inclination to do so. He also foretold my aptitude for lecturing and writing, and, after my mother spent five weeks in India in 1979, during which time she met with Vimalananda on several occasions, he went out of his way to help me get set up in my career, which he did specifically because he wanted my parents to be proud

of me.

And proud they were, so proud that when the first *Aghora* book saw the light of day, my mother and father made it a point to sell the book to many of their fellow Baptists, the fearsome goddess that graced its cover notwithstanding. Not long thereafter my mother said to me, in her adorable Texas twang, "You know, Robert, although I tried to read this, I just couldn't understand it. But if you wrote it, I know it must be good." Clearly her faith in me, and her personal experience of Vimalananda, exceeded any concerns that outward appearances might have spurred.

Vimalananda predicted success for me, and successful I have been. Many of his other predictions, like the death of communism (which he insisted was inevitable at a time when its demise seemed highly unlikely) have already come true, the Berlin Wall falling a mere six years after his demise. Others, like the descent of the United States from its status as the world's sole superpower, we may be currently in the midst of; and yet others, like India's eventual rise to the status of an economic giant, appear at least possible. One prediction continues to fulfill itself as time passes: that what he said about "Westerners" being materialistic and thinking they can buy knowledge would, and now does, apply in large part to modern-day Easterners as well, including Indians.

Some things, though, never change, and in the thirty-plus years since *Aghora* first appeared, though much has been written on Tantra by scholars and others, in general the West continues to be obsessed with its sexual aspect, and East with its magic, widely assumed to be black. It is as if the concept of Tantra has become tightly wedded to these other notions, and resists being divorced from them. Of course, both magic and sex are very much part of Tantra, and in the years since I sat with Vimalananda, I have learned more about both, from various sources. The tenets of Taoist sexology have proved particularly valuable for me for gaining comprehension of how theory connects to practice.

As indicated in the introduction to the first edition of this work, when Vimalananda spoke of Tantra he emphasized that he meant the Tantra of lineage, not that which has been consigned to books. He always valued practice over theory, especially when it came to sex and other intoxications, and his unconcern for conforming to convention extends to the stories he told that do not always agree with the widely-available versions to be found in the classical texts. In certain matters his beliefs are diametrically opposite from the consensus, a case in point being his insistence that the Gayatri mantra that is taught to every Brahmana is not the "real" Gayatri mantra.

When I review his overall influence on me, however, what I

remembers as being most significant was less the details that he provided me (substantial though they were) and more the 'feel' of his presence, certain aspects of which (e.g. the look of his eyes, the sound of his voice) have stayed with me ever since. It was for me a unique blessing to have enjoyed that presence, particularly since those remembered sensory cues continue to act as mnemonics that help me recall his tuitions. Each time I re-read the *Aghora* books, I am back in that presence.

One significant reason for issuing second editions of these three books is that they originally appeared in 1986, 1994 and 1997. The first was at first intended as a stand-alone volume; only later did the idea of a trilogy emerge. Reviewing them nearly a quarter-century after the last appeared has permitted me to attempt to make them 'more' of a trilogy, united in outlay and typography, similar in cover design, edited from a more unified perspective.

One omission from the first edition however remains: there is still no photo of Vimalananda included. Though many have requested it, his words yet ring in my ears:

My friends will not like it if you don't take care of my photo. They will view it as a sign of disrespect. I don't care; I am just a nobody. But some of my ethereal friends are very orthodox and very strict and will not think twice before they punish for disrespect.

I have no reason to believe that this situation has changed, nor do I sense that either his Junior or Senior Guru Maharaj is any more interested in his being well known now than they were then. For this reason, Vimalananda's real name does not grace these pages either.

His words, though, continue to speak for themselves. His teachings remain as fresh now as they were when I received them, and I continue to find ways to apply them in my daily life. In Chapter Seven of this book for instance you will find the words:

Remember, the entire world is a smashan for an aghori. Everyone is born with their death fixed, which means to an aghori that they are all dead already; they are all already skeletons.

A *smashan* is a cremation ground, where the bereaved gather to send off the deceased. Except for Bombay and Benaras, most of the cities I frequent do not have conveniently-located smashans where I can go, as he instructed me, to watch corpses burn and meditate on the impermanent nature of embodied life. But as a professional peripatetic I often find myself in airports, which like smashans are also places of transit, and I have taken to viewing those airports as smashans, and the transients therein as skeletons. I don't always

succeed completely at this visualization, but at this stage of my life I still have plenty of opportunities to keep trying to perfect it.

Conveniently, this perspective also serves as a reminder that with each day my own mortality strides closer. Each day that passes is a reminder that even now, in my mid-sixties, I have still not achieved my full potential, which provides further incentive to work harder the next day, and then the next. Soon I will reach the age that Vimalananda reached when he left his body, and my cells will know what it is like to live so long. If I am destined to live yet longer, I pray that my determination to live life to the fullest, and to strive to realize the Supreme, will never flag so long as life remains in my tissues. May this account of the life of a unique human being bless every reader greatly, and enduringly. Guru Om!

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[1] In brief, when one day a man spit repeatedly on Eknath, instead of becoming irritated by this recurring insult, Eknath repeatedly bathed in the sacred River Godavari. Eventually his adversary tired and acknowledged that saint's greatness.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS IS THE STORY OF THE AGHORI VIMALANANDA. An aghori is a practitioner of a spiritual discipline whose name, Aghora, can be interpreted as "deeper than deep," or "gentle," or "filled with light, illumined." Aghora is the apotheosis of Tantra, the Indian religion whose Supreme Deity is the Mother Goddess. Tantra has thus far generally been depicted in the modern world in its most vulgar and debased forms, promulgated particularly in the West by those who equate sex with super-consciousness, and in India by those who hear Tantra and think black magic. Sex is indeed central to Tantra, the cosmic sexual union of universal dualities, and the results of Tantra rituals can sometimes produce supernatural results. However, the ultimate aim of Tantra is *laya*, return of the seeker to the state of undifferentiated existence, union of the individual with the infinite. Being bereft of tenets and dogma, Tantra cannot be termed a religion, but rather a loose grouping of methods for achieving this laya, which has been described with a sexual metaphor: the union of the personal ego (which is archetypally female) with the Absolute (archetypally male). Sexual rituals are employed under special circumstances in Tantra to hasten spiritual progress, but licentiousness is foreign to Tantra's classical tradition.

Tantra has been divided into Right-Hand and Left-Hand Paths, which have been defined in different ways. In general, though, the Right-Hand Path is the more orthodox, and is commonly understood as a search for the Unlimited Reality via the road of external imposition of stainlessness, and by the direction of all one's attention and devotion to a single deity. While some of its practices might seem strange to the uninitiated observer, its emphasis on personal purity will be familiar to those who are acquainted with Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and/or Raja Yoga, all of which conform (more or less) to mainstream ideals of religious discipline.

The Left-Hand Path, whose rituals often resemble those of its colleague on the Right, relies instead on its practitioners' internal purity to protect them while they perform rites that may involve necromancy, intoxicants, sex, or other 'forbidden' practices, often involving multiple deities, demigods, spirits and other ethereal beings. This path is far more difficult than the Right-Hand 'straight and narrow' corridor, and many serious aspirants automatically shun the Left-Hand Path because of its potential for misuse, which is indeed

great; one text observes that “walking on swords or riding a tiger is child’s play by comparison.” Ironically, undisciplined individuals who will not be able to successfully withstand the rigors of the Left-Hand Path are often attracted to it, as it seems to offer an opportunity for unbridled indulgence in the name of spirituality, and sincere seekers who might eventually succeed at it are often frightened away from it by its potential temptations.

The few who do fruitfully complete the rigorous training required by the Left-Hand Path do so by first undergoing purification of body and mind and strictly curbing their craving for sensory gratification. Only a few aspirants will reach the level of clarity that will allow their gurus to assign them practices which to the untutored observer might seem hedonistic or ‘sinful’. Aghora is not indulgence; it is rather the forcible conversion of darkness into light, of the opacity of the limited individual personality into the luminescence of the Absolute. An aghori goes so deeply into darkness, into all things undreamable to ordinary mortals, that he or she comes out into light. Sects in India are often distinguished by color of turban or drape of robe. Popularly, aghoris have been stereotyped as ash-swathed ascetics with long matted hair who stroll through life wild-eyed, skulking about in charnel grounds, competing with jackals for carcasses. The title aghori is even claimed by some groups who assert an exclusive right to it. Vimalananda’s own definition of aghora was independent of doctrine or dogma, and for that matter his usage of terms like ‘Vedic’ and ‘Tantric’ was sometimes also devoid of detectable textual support, for he cared little for written knowledge. As you read his story remember that what he called ‘Vedic’ might not necessarily be ‘Vedic’ to a temple priest – whose concept of what is ‘Vedic’ might not necessarily be ‘Vedic’ to a scholar. Multiple opinions might each be valid in a particular context.

Vimalananda believed – and it is a noble Indian tradition to do so – that a lineage’s practices prevail over textual injunctions. Given adequate time and effort you can usually become whatever you believe yourself to be; you are responsible for yourself, and your experience of yourself is authoritative for you. This attitude often irritates those who have invested heavily in the infallibility of a text or texts, but then Vimalananda had no use for organized religion anyway.

Throughout his life Vimalananda resisted all attempts to fit him into any mold. He was without doubt distinctly individual, and guarded his originality jealously, but was simultaneously exceedingly difficult to pin down and define. What is spoken of in this book as ‘Aghora’ is thus ‘Aghora’ according to Vimalananda, and might or might not be so identified by another ‘aghori’. Vimalananda worked

with many systems, selected elements from each, melding them into tools for self-development. He taught that every individual should "carve out his own niche": study what he or she could understand, select those practices which they could sincerely do, and do them faithfully, for the love of God, not the promise of gain. By this definition Aghora will always be different for everyone, and only the aghori's attitude held in common. Each true aghori marches to the beat of his or her own drum, but all aghoris beat that drum with the same intensity and disregard for self-preservation.

Vimalananda denied that true aghoris can be discerned by any external sign or mark. Experience in the world of ascetics had taught him that many fake aghoris lurk under convincing outward appurtenances, for he stoutly maintained that true Aghora is wholly internal. While I knew him Vimalananda lived in an ordinary flat in Bombay, going about his business discreetly while inside being pure aghori: as hard as diamonds or as soft as wax, as the situation demanded. To his spiritual "children" he was the perfect mother: a combination of friend, philosopher, and guide. To those with inflated spiritual egos he was merciless.

Aghoris aim to gain full knowledge of the reality that is death; they love to spend time in cemeteries and burning grounds (collectively called *smashan* in Hindi). They crave not physical death but rather destruction of all their limitations, in particular the fear of death that is innate in all who are born. A genuine aghori is never happier than when he is seated intoxicated in the smashan performing a ritual near a funeral pyre, flames licking the blackness of midnight. Vimalananda, so concerned with external propriety in other ways, never hesitated to visit the smashan when he had rituals to perform.

Some of the events described in this book may offend some readers' sensitivities, and this was partly Vimalananda's intention. He wanted the 'holier-than-thou' class of spiritual aspirants to know that "filth and orgies in the graveyard" (as one American once described Aghora) can be as conducive to spiritual advancement as can asanas, pranayama, and other "purer" disciplines. But offering offense to conventional sensibilities is also intrinsic to Aghora, which will always remain totally incomprehensible to some people. For some people no amount of explanation will satisfy when they question the wisdom or the spiritual benefit inherent in, say, consumption of human brain. Aghora is mysterious and deep – deeper than deep, in fact – and only those who can lay aside all their cultural clothing and plunge into it naked can dive into its depths.

When Vimalananda and I visited the United States in December 1981 one of my friends asked him, "As much as I have read about you and heard about you and now listened to you, I still cannot

understand what an aghori is. Would you please try to explain it to me?"

Vimalananda told me later, "She asked me so honestly and earnestly that I felt I had to reply eloquently, even though this is really not something you can put into so many words."

He told her, "An aghori is beyond the bound of the earthly shackles; nay, something above the elements which shape the universe, and you. He takes a sort of intoxicant and thus gets intoxicated in Supreme Love which emanates from the innermost recesses of his heart. Shall I call it interiority? It is that which is beyond awareness. He gives off the best part of love. Why part? Part of the Supreme, Universal Love, where one experiences, with the help of perception, All-in-One/One-in-All. When you, the finite, merge into infinity what dost thou not know? During this stage he merges with his own deity so that he becomes Him: capital H. That is why he is said to have gone from darkness to divine enlightenment. This is an aghori."

Vimalananda was an extremist, certain that anything worth doing was worth doing well, ready to stake his all to ensure that whatever he began was completed, to succeed or die trying. Aghora was for him the doctrine of no return, a personal creed that demanded relinquishing all in exchange for divine love. He wanted to warn spiritual dilettantes that the frivolity with which they treat discipline and the self-delusion they attempt to pass off as enlightenment is merely a cheating of their own consciousness which leads only to the pit. For example, when I was once unwise enough to comment that a certain guru was supposedly awakening his disciples' Kundalinis by boffing them with a peacock feather duster, Vimalananda exploded in reply: "Has the Kundalini Shakti become so cheap that some so-called godman can awaken it in multitudes of people all at once? Oh, no! Were our rishis (ancient seers) fools to spend decades out in the jungles working at hard penances to awaken Kundalini and to perfect Aghora? No, the people who think they can buy Kundalini are the fools. Westerners think they can purchase knowledge, but all they get for their money is fake teachers from India who dish out any slop to them and get rich on their gullibility."

Vimalananda conformed to none of the usual guru stereotypes. When at the races he dressed like the horse owner he was, and when at home he dressed like an ordinary "Bombayman". All the "unspiritual" things he did – eating meat on occasion, using intoxicants frequently, smoking cigarettes incessantly – he did for specific but hidden reasons. He deliberately cultivated a carefree image to avoid attracting attention to himself, and most of the people who did not know him well never suspected that he might be of a

spiritual bent. This led me to early skepticism of his capabilities, for I had been brainwashed by spiritual 'authorities' to expect a certain appearance and behavior from a guru.

After trying and failing to speed certain persons along the spiritual path (he being unsuccessful due to their unpreparedness) Vimalananda determined to provide real tools for spiritual cultivation only to those students whom he had first thoroughly tested and prepared. He never referred to himself as a guru, nor did he act as self-denominated gurus often act. For example, when speaking English he always called me Robby, a nickname that he was the first to use for me, and he did so not because he wanted to impress me by giving me a Sanskrit name but because in Bengali *robi* means "sun" (in Sanskrit, *ravi*), and the name Robert (which means "bright") comes from the same Indo-European root as Ravi, which name he would use for me when speaking in an Indian language.

Though he made a show of complete disinterest in teaching, he actually spent much time evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of his various spiritual "children", doing what he could to (indirectly) train each according to capability, following the Indian tradition known as *kurma guru* (literally, "Turtle Teacher"). After a mother turtle buries her eggs on a sandy beach it is said that she retreats a certain distance and then concentrates on those eggs with such an intense current of love that the warmth of her love reaches the eggs and causes them to hatch. In the same way, a kurma guru seems to pay no attention to his disciples' progress while actually monitoring them closely, sometimes acting on them from afar.

Vimalananda's entire life was teaching and being taught. He was always ready to learn something new, and always ready to teach – in his own way – if a student deserved to be taught and was sincerely willing to learn. His day-to-day life was a lesson for whoever could understand it, a continual resubmission of his will to the Divine Will. He was not easy to fathom, and deliberately made his lessons hard to understand. When he decided I should learn something he would deftly insert it into a flood of mundane trivialities directed at others in the room. He would expect me to be alert enough to pick it out, and weeks or months later he would question me about it, suddenly and without warning. I would then be expected not only to have noted and remembered the datum but to have processed it internally to fit my own situation as best I could. He often observed, "What sort of educational system do we have nowadays, that announces examinations in advance so that any idiot can mug up a bunch of notes in preparation? The key to testing someone is to test them when they least expect it and are least prepared for it. Then you have an accurate idea of how much they really know."

Often just keeping up with Vimalananda's talks was test enough. Depending on his mood and audience he might speak in very fluent high British English, or in colloquial Gujarati (his mother tongue), or (most commonly) in eloquent Hindi. When the mood struck him, he could switch to high-flown Urdu, and periodically stabbed at Marathi or Bengali. He had an incredible command over a wide variety of language styles, which he could permute at will with his actor's nature to obtain precisely the right effect on his audience. Over the eight years and nine months that I was privileged to know him he repeated each of his favorite stories a dozen times or more, but never in the same way each time, each repetition uniquely flavored and delivered.

Rendering all his words into English was thus no easy task. I have tried to approximate in his usual English style the intent that flowed through whatever vocabulary, syntax, and diction he was employing in whatever language he was speaking at the time. Working from memory and from the brief notes he would permit me to jot down after our conversations I decided it would be most effective to leave the narrative in his own words throughout, to permit readers to imagine if they like that they, too, sat with Vimalananda and heard him tell his tales.

There is another reason for presenting his words as they were spoken. Vimalananda's impression on people was achieved less by what he said or did and more by how he said or did it. His being was more significant than his actions, but he made people dig for his interior reality, and most often they would come up empty-handed. Those few who knew him well – as well as he would permit himself to be known – could never agree with each other on who he was, as his personality differed for each of his friends. He was a multitude of different people, all in one body. Once, before he had met me, he had a desire to jot down his musings and to accompany them with testimonies from his close acquaintances. He asked several of his friends, "If you had to write down something about me what would you write?" One replied with a single word, "Versatile." Another said, "Words just cannot express the reality." A third opined, "I would turn in a blank sheet of paper, because by saying nothing everything is said." His foster daughter had the last word by informing him, "No one has any business to read about you because unless they have experienced you they could never who you are."

She was motivated by possessiveness, no doubt, and in fact knew him no better than did any of the rest of us did, but her point is well-taken. How does one convey in two-dimensional print a multidimensional being? It was not as if he had anything to hide; there was nothing inscrutable about him, he never put on airs. He was available for everyone's scrutiny, and would talk to us as a child talks

to its mother, without altering or holding anything back for the sake of self-image. He was a true innocent at heart, a child in many ways, never ashamed to display his artless wonderment or admit to his mistakes. Perhaps it was this child within him that made him such a good mother to all those around him; or was it his concentration on the Divine Mother engendered he child in him? Until his dying day Vimalananda's sole refuge was the Motherhood of God.

Whatever the causation he like a child loved to have fun. An incorrigible prankster from birth, always out for a practical joke, he was ready to laugh at anything funny and to make everyone nearby laugh if he could. Nothing was bland around him; he might be miserable, overjoyed or profoundly taciturn but never merely sad, happy or quiet. He never played any role half heartedly but always threw himself fully into everything he did, no matter how minor. There was not a phony bone in his body.

His personality was in truth amazingly versatile. Though his family once owned most of Bombay, and his early life was princely, the life of idle riches never tempted him. He knew by turns fabulous wealth and wretched poverty, and served variously as an army officer, textile machinery manufacturer, dairy owner, quarry operator, race course gambler, and anchorite. He achieved high academic qualifications and observed strict spiritual disciplines. Experts at Indian music regarded him as both a maestro both instrumental and vocal. Among those who knew him he was renowned for his expertise at astrology, his ability to diagnose disease by merely looking at a patient's face, and his capacity to interpret the body markings on humans, horses and elephants. In his youth he was a semipro wrestler and won his last bout at age 38, defeating a boy half his age. I never saw him beaten at arm wrestling, even when his opponent was a powerful young wrestler one-third his age. His friends regularly demanded that he cook for them, so tasty and unique were his culinary concoctions. He could move every muscle in his body, including those in his ears and eyebrows, in time to music, thanks to his training in Indian dance.

As a consummate artist he liked to say, "Here in India we believe in watching the artist at work, not in looking at the work of the artist. Artistry is not what the artist produces, it is the artist himself, producing. A great composer's music may be transmitted from generation to generation in the West. Our great musicians do not concentrate on creating compositions; they create new musicians to maintain the progression of the artistry." Vimalananda created no successor, so what of his artistry can be transmitted appears in his words, accessible to alert readers with subtle perceptivity.

Vimalananda could and did learn from anyone, and would make more artistic whatever he happened to learn. He put the stamp of his

personality on everything he said, did, and created, a stamp that hopefully appears on these pages as well. He was charming and profound, and it may sometimes seem that he was in awe of himself. In a way, he was, not because he was conceited; he was instead in awe of whatever was at that moment located within him, as Chapter Eight (on avishkara) explains in some detail.

Vimalananda had an ego, some of which is reflected here. He never tried to expunge that ego, for he maintained that death of the ego meant certain death of the organism; he preferred instead to keep his ego tightly under his control. He equated 'ego', the individual's power of self-identification, with the much-misunderstood Kundalini Shakti. His control of his Kundalini enabled him to disengage his consciousness from his own limited (if multitalented) personality so that he could self-identify with unlimited, divine personalities. Often when he spoke it was with the awesome confidence of divinity speaking through him, and this confidence could come across as arrogance to those humans who heard but could not or would not comprehend what was behind it.

He could be maddening to deal with when he thought he was right but happened to be mistaken, and there were times when I found it difficult to respect him, and other times when it was challenging to like him much. But it was never difficult to love him. When first we met I tried to analyze him, to dissect his opinions that I might preserve the objective aloofness I felt appropriate for a scientist. All in vain, for the current of warmth which flowed continuously over whoever he took into his circle of "children" was irresistible. My distrustful Western nature balked at first but eventually my doubt dissolved despite itself, and he and I settled into the seemingly preordained role of father and son, or perhaps more accurately 'father and mother and son', for never did his love lose its motherliness.

Two principles guided his teaching: compassion for all beings, including the seemingly insentient such as rocks; and perpetual awareness of rnanubandhana, the bondage of karmic debt. His compassion for his most intimate friends and "children" led him to ruin his health and exhaust his wealth to insulate them as far as possible from their own karmic debts. His shoulders were unusually wide, perhaps due to his training as a wrestler, and he used to say, "Since Nature has given me such broad shoulders I should support whomever I can. Why should any child worry about rnanubandhana when its mother or father is there to repay its debts?" He treated all who came before him, even buffoons, as a fond and indulgent mother would treat her beloved offspring. Women found him irresistible because he projected onto every female the same tremendous devotion which he directed in his worship toward the Mother Goddess.

From the many names he used during his lifetime he and I selected for use in this book the name Vimalananda, whose variety of meanings represent (approximately) who he was. The Sanskrit word "Vimalananda" can be derived in several ways, one being vimala (pure) plus ananda (joy, bliss), or, literally, "the bliss of purity," for malam vidvamsayati iti vimalah: "the absolute annihilation of filth is vimala," 'filth' here being the filth of attribution, the limitations that incarnation imposes upon pure existence. When the cosmic play of creation, preservation, and destruction is transcended all limitation is transcended, and that state is vimala.

Or, when an aspirant has gone beyond the ego's flaws, when the ego is completely naked, cleansed of its accretions of personality and its stains of desire, then it perceives pure consciousness and knows that pure consciousness to be both "Thyself" and "Myself," and that is vimala. Or, the ananda an aghori receives from his rituals cannot be purer (vimala) because he sees the face of his beloved deity in everything and everyone.

The name's personal significance is that Vimalananda's physical mother was named Vimala, and Vimala + nanda = "son of Vimala." Vimalananda told me, "When I was a wandering ascetic I thought it would be wonderful to appear at my home one day and have the servant announce to my mother, 'Vimalananda has come.' What joy it would have given her!"

So Vimalananda it was for this book, in lieu of such other monikers as Aghora Nath (Master of Aghora), Shah-e-mauj (King of Bliss), or even Bandal-e-aftaab (Sun among Exaggerators). This last is particularly significant in that Vimalananda was, well, 'larger than life', and some of his stories may seem expanded beyond the bounds of plausibility. We in the modern world ordinarily equate truth with the 'objective' reality that is tangible to the senses (frequently ignoring the fundamental subjectivity of all sense perception). Vimalananda though was chiefly concerned that the subjective reality of the stories he told exert specific effects on the subjective realities of his listeners, for he held that objective reality is continuously being altered by our perceptions of it. In this context it is thus immaterial if, for example, someone really does cut off his limbs and throw them into a blazing fire, only to have them reattach spontaneously after several hours, or whether he merely visualizes the scenario so intensely that he thoroughly convinces himself that the events did indeed occur. The result, increased stability of mind regardless of external irritant, will create increased physical stability as well. Reality for the mind is defined by its perceptions, and Aghora is total control of perception.

When Vimalananda felt it essential to make a point to some "child" he would unhesitatingly exaggerate or magnify his stories, just as

adults might do for those of tender age. In addition, Vimalananda spoke mainly for Indians, who often inflate the content of events they report. Indian listeners (especially in Bombay) have generally learned to automatically compensate for this expansion by mentally scaling down whatever is said, which often caused Vimalananda's exaggerations to be perceived approximately accurately by a local listener.

Being continuously aware of this cultural trait I have attempted to account for it by calibrating the stories you read here for maximum veracity, at least in the system of reality in which Vimalananda lived. Also, the language of this book has been slightly sanitized at his own request. He used to make regular use of vulgarity, but only when he spoke with people whose normal speech is vulgar (as is the case with many natives of Bombay), to be coherent with them. Furthermore, each cuss word was spoken with a hidden meaning behind it, a hoary Tantric tradition called sandhya bhasha ("twilight speech"). But that is another story.

No idle tale ever escaped his lips. Each was aimed at a specific listener and might change its form according to the lesson he felt said listener needed to learn. All his stories were based on incidents which actually 'happened' to him, at least subjectively. As noted above, however, he transcended the blasé factuality of objective reality and ascended to the mythic. His tales were carefully textured with deep meanings available to the clever pupil who could properly interpret the words and the intonation and emotion with which they were spoken, ignoring the niggling detail that he usually scorned.

Vimalananda would make it a point to unveil and present a story to a gathering of people in his living room at a moment when the conversation seemed innocuous, and typically someone in that company of listeners would realize that it referred to a situation about which he had intended to ask Vimalananda but had thus far been unable to do so. The target individual would not often be named, but a word here or a clue there would disclose his intention, and there was always a thrill in sitting quietly and suddenly realizing that an anecdote was being directed at you.

In the way that a mother can play with a child even while keeping an eye on her cooking pots, Vimalananda loved to play with his "children" while concurrently remaining mindful of other spheres of activity and other levels of awareness. Acknowledging this he often said, "To be really aware you must be able to know simultaneously what is going on thousands of miles away today, what may have happened here centuries ago, what will happen anywhere in the world decades from now, and what is occurring, has occurred, or will occur on other planes of existence. And you must still act as if you know

nothing, sitting and talking with people, playing the part that Nature has assigned to you." In his music, his conversation, his chess game, and even his sleep, he was always aware both of what was going on around him and, effortlessly, of some 'other reality' as well.

Or at least he made it seem effortless, though it surely involved tremendous strain which occasionally showed through. He credited tobacco with his ability to function in several planes of being at once, and after close observation of him for years I can state confidently that though he was addicted to cigarettes, a fact he made no attempt to conceal, tobacco certainly did seem to exert a markedly beneficial effect on his consciousness, infinitely more than I have seen in any other smoker. Nicotine in small doses has been shown to have a positive influence on many bodily and brain functions, and Vimalananda was such a veteran of intoxicants that he could easily imbibe more nicotine than anyone else without deleterious effect.

Smoking did eventually kill him, from cardiac failure, or so his doctors said; though those of us who knew him well knew that he had decided exactly six months before his death that he intended to die. His excuse was that he had finished everything in this life that he was expected to do, and to live any longer would be to contract new rnanubandhanas. He also predicted, for years, that the day he gave up smoking would be the day he died. For as long as I knew him he smoked at least one cigarette daily until December 11, 1983, a day on which he refused a cigarette whenever it was offered, fully aware of what he was doing. That night not long after midnight he died, and I cremated him at the next sunset.

From the day we met Vimalananda had regularly told me that I would cremate him, this despite his natural son, who was in Bombay when he died and who, according to Hindu tradition, should have cremated his father. But even eight years before the fact Vimalananda steadfastly maintained that, "My son will not even come to the smashan to watch me burn, nor will my wife." In the event indeed, they did not. When once I asked him about this he told me, "There is no escaping the Law of Karma. I have told everyone the truth, that you are destined to cremate me, and all of them have become jealous of you because they think they deserve to be involved themselves somehow. They don't know what they are talking about or else they wouldn't speak thus. I may have a physical son, but you are my spiritual son, and I will have my death my way. Do you know what is an aghori's profoundest expression of love? It is these four words: 'You will cremate me.'

"You will assist me to return to my Beloved. And when I am burning, I desire only one thing: that you play a tape recording of Jim Reeves singing 'Precious Lord, Take My Hand.' I know all the Hindus

will think it is a sacrilege, but pay no attention to them. That's all I desire, no rituals, no phoniness. I only want to go back to where I belong, and to have my Big Daddy take me there by the hand."

Vimalananda was cremated on the same pyre which had previously hosted his father, his mother, and his young son, Ranu, years before. Jim Reeves's voice did sing at his funeral to help release him from his 'earthly shackles', and most of his ashes were consigned to the Arabian Sea, whose surf pounds the outer wall of the Banganga Smashan in Bombay; the rest were collected for ritual immersion in various of India's sacred rivers.

This has been a difficult book for me to write. I spent months groping for direction, writing and rewriting, hoping to locate the best angle from which to freeze Vimalananda in prose until eventually realizing that he cannot be justly portrayed from a single angle, just as it was never possible to capture him definitively on film. He always avoided the camera, and none of his photographs which do exist resemble each other. In fact, it was always difficult to recognize the living Vimalananda from his pictures, because his entire face would change according to his state of consciousness at the moment. He was loath to part with photos of himself, which is why none adorns this book. He would say, "My friends will not like it if you don't take care of my photo. They will view it as a sign of disrespect. I don't care; I am just a nobody. But some of my ethereal friends are very orthodox and very strict and will not think twice before they punish for disrespect."

He certainly was not confined by many of the restrictions that confine most mortals. His eyes, for example, insisted on periodically changing color. Sometimes a light blue, they were often instead light green, the color of the grape known as anab-e shahi, and at some moments they could become nearly colorless. People noticing this for the first time would often point it out to him incredulously and he would disclaim, "How ridiculous! Is it possible for anyone's eyes to change colors?" At other times when he was feeling playful he would adjust his eye color to match mine and would then call everyone in the room over to see and comment. He loved to watch people react to an out-of-the-ordinary event because he felt he could gauge them better when they were caught off guard.

An enigma, a puzzle, a paradox, a riddle, a "mark of interrogation," as he himself put it: Who was Vimalananda? The more I remained in his company the less I knew about him. He was truly 'no one', as no one personality was present perpetually within his body that could be pinned down and categorically identified as 'his'. He could be hard and soft by turns, alternately refined and coarse according to his environs. One memorable night we started off dining

elegantly at a posh Turf Club party and ended up, as fate would have it, listening to music in the middle of Bombay's red-light district. Vimalananda finally took up an instrument himself and taught the delighted strumpets a new song, just for fun!

Psychiatrists would probably classify Vimalananda as suffering from some mental disorder, and he himself used to say, "Either I must be mad or everyone else is; there are no two ways about it." Though no psychiatrist I am a licensed physician and, in my opinion (an opinion shared by those who lived with him for many years before I met him), he was far saner than is the rest of the world. Facile formulae could not and cannot describe him.

I wrote this book knowing well that some of what is written will be offensive or at the least incomprehensible to some, and that other passages will impel the curiosity of others to try out some of the more daring procedures. The natural reticence I felt for permitting Vimalananda to be introduced to an unprepared audience would have kept this material from appearance in print had I not had clear instructions to do so. The path to publication began years ago when a man dressed as a medieval Rajput warrior was invited to Vimalananda's home in Bombay. After some preliminaries the spirit of a hero centuries dead, Kalaji Rathod, entered this man's body, broke open coconuts with a cavalry saber, and made predictions from the pieces thus formed. He advised me, when my turn came, to note down everything Vimalananda spoke. Vimalananda, who was not usually impressed with such performances and who had assiduously refused to allow anyone to record any of his words up to this time, mysteriously agreed and even encouraged me in this. He never read any of my writings on him until the first draft of this manuscript was ready. When I presented it to him he turned through a few pages, made a few comments, and lapsed quickly into his former seeming disinterest.

After making this assignment Vimalananda would ask me from time to time if I had noted down some particularly intricate comment; this suggested to me that he still expected me to continue in my role as scribe. He cloaked his meanings more thoroughly than ever before even as he continued to engineer situations, a pastime at which he was expert. He would make use of the situations which developed spontaneously around him in his home, which was a veritable circus, testing me during and after the unfolding of the situation to determine what I had learned. As soon as he felt that he had dispelled my major doubts on a subject he would usually refuse to talk about it any longer, expecting me to learn more about it from direct experience. He explained that this would preserve the keenness of my spiritual hunger, to prevent me from ever losing my alertness or pausing in my pondering. He never spoon-fed me.

Gradually I accumulated a heap of information, enough to fill many books. The writing and rewriting of this first volume has enabled me to digest Vimalananda's teachings more efficiently, and I have come to understand that Vimalananda's real intention in making me write was for the writing to act as a sadhana (spiritual exercise) for me.

Summaries and conclusions are supposed to close the books they serve, but I am listing mine here in the introduction. I cannot summarize Vimalananda, nor can I conclude anything about him. During the last visit of the Emperor Akbar's personality into Vimalananda's frame His Majesty told us, "Do you think you know the possessor of this body? You know nothing! If he is your friend and loved one, well, we spirits love him too. But don't be so stupid and insolent to think you can comprehend him. I do not know him, you cannot know him, no one knows him. This is the sort of man who allows you to play about with him, you fools! Quite apart from knowing him in his entirety you will never, ever be able to know a single hair from the head of Vimalananda!"

Vimalananda himself requested me to compile my notes into this book and publish it now. He wanted Westerners to be exposed to Aghora. In his own words, "I once wanted to go to the West to demonstrate the practical uses of Aghora, the real spiritual science of India. I know I can deliver the goods, but whenever I tried to go my mentors always prevented me. They didn't want me to be tempted by glamour and power. They knew I could be a better businessman than anyone else – it is in my genes, after all – but they didn't want to watch me fall so low. I am not destined for commercialization; I am destined for something different.

"It is not necessary to publish this while I am alive. I have not achieved all I have achieved in this life merely to capitalize on it. I don't want the last years of my life to be spoiled by curiosity-seekers who want to meet me to find out if I am for real. I know who I am and don't care what anyone else thinks.

"Besides that, if I become too well known I'll have to sit on a throne and say things like, 'Blessings be upon you,' which is bull because you can't give blessings away like that. I won't be able to move about freely in society and play about as I do now. No more jokes, no more laughing sprees. I'll have to become stern and solemn. Why should I give up what little peace and quiet I have now, just to be worshiped by a bunch of people who don't even know what they are doing? How do all these so-called saints stand it, I wonder?

"Publish this book after I am gone. Let people know the truth. Let them know what is what. Out of the thousands who may read it at least a few will be sincere. They will try to learn more, and then

Nature Herself will arrange for them to learn just as She did for me, and they will be taught according to their capabilities. The progression will go on; there is nothing to fear.

"I have never gone out and tried to attract anyone to me. People have come and gone. I don't ask them to come and I don't object when they go. What is it to me? I only want a few. If I love one or a few I can love well. If I try to love all I will just be cheating myself. Only Jesus could love all."

From Vimalananda's select circle of loved ones I was awarded the commission to try to explain to those who never met him just who and what he was. Hence this book. No one can disturb him now. His story can be told, and his privacy preserved. I am pleased to offer this volume to those who can read it; I regard it as an offering to him, an offering that is also a promise I have kept, an obligation I have requited, a long standing desire of his I have finally fulfilled.

Here is Vimalananda as I knew him. Even after hundreds of meetings he could baffle me with the incredible variegation of his knowledge, charm me with his ever-present effluence, and infect me into a smile with his good humor. I almost even got used to his anger. But having charmed and enthralled me and his other listeners he never tired of telling us, "Don't take anything I say as gospel truth. I am human, I make mistakes. Test on yourselves what I've told you. Try it out, experience it, and then you will know whether or not I'm telling you the truth. When you examine a gem, you must evaluate it from all its facets before you can decide on its value."

Here is Vimalananda, for your evaluation.

CHAPTER ONE

MA

To be a guru you have to say, "I know, and I can teach you." But if I say that, well, I'm finished. I can never learn anything else. I have shut myself off from anything new. If I remain a student all my life, though, I will always be ready to learn new things.

I NEVER CALL ANY OF THE PEOPLE who come to me for spiritual guidance "disciples." I am just an ordinary person. I have lived unknown and I will die unknown, except to a few. I am not interested in anything the world can offer me and even if I die tomorrow I have no regrets. I have lived my life to the fullest; I have done enough. I'll always be thankful to Nature for permitting me to achieve so much. I will never have disciples, only "children," because that is the way a real guru should treat a disciple: as a spiritual son or daughter. And the bond between them is far more intense than that between a physical parent and child.

Even if the child is wicked or wayward, do the parents stop loving it? No! In fact if they are true parents they will love the child all the more, because that child gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their generosity and love, just as in the case of the Prodigal Son. The parents have a chance to forgive the child, and that feeds the ego. So, no matter what a child might do, its parents are always bound to love it—if they are true parents.

It is the same way with a guru and his disciples. No matter where the "child" goes or how much he curses the guru, the mentor knows the "child" must return eventually. Where will he go? The guru can afford to wait for the "child" and forgive him when he returns.

Once there was a guru who made one of his disciples put on a loincloth and then sent him out into the world. Tying on a loincloth symbolized that the boy was meant to be a celibate mendicant. Everything went fine for the boy until one day when he washed his

loincloth, and while it was hanging up to dry a mouse came along and chewed up part of it. The boy said to himself, "This will never do. I need a cat." So he got a cat to save his loincloth from mice. But then the cat had to eat, so he arranged for a cow to provide milk for the cat. Who will look after the cow? A cowherd was engaged to cut grass to feed the cow. But then how to pay for the cowherd? A field was taken, and farming was begun so there would be produce with which to pay the cowherd. The farm in turn required labor, and in addition the boy had to live nearby in order to oversee it; so, a house was constructed. Who is to run the house? A wife is necessary. So the boy married and threw away the loincloth, which was the cause of the whole mess in the first place. When the guru returned to that area after some time to check on his disciple's progress he was amazed to see a large farmhouse and cultivated fields where he had expected to find jungle. Outside the gate of the house was a watchman who asked the guru what business he had in the neighborhood. When the guru asked where his boy might be the watchman replied, "Sahib? Oh, he is in his house." The guru said to himself, "*Wah*, *wah*, my boy, so you have become a great man, a sahib," and went into the house to meet the boy.

After the usual greetings he told his disciple, "Look how you have got yourself re-entangled in the world! Now don't worry, I am here to save you. Forget all this and come back with me to the jungle."

The boy replied, "Oh, no, *Maharaj*, this is much more to my liking; I intend to stay here."

The guru didn't say anything else, but just went off a little distance to meditate. Shortly thereafter the disciple's mind changed completely. He realized the cage he had created for himself, and he left everything and returned to his guru. This is the kind of guru to have: one who once he accepts you as his disciple never forsakes you until the end, come what may. The bond between guru and disciple is stronger than any other, which is why the guru is to be respected even before God.

People come to me for many reasons, you know. Basically, though, they come because they are miserable. Most of them have worldly miseries and are satisfied with worldly happiness, which is why I don't talk to most people about spirituality. Most people are just not interested in experiencing anything other than food, sleep, and sex, no matter what they may claim. I'm sorry, but it's true. And the few who are after more in life are mainly after the happiness which the world can provide them: fame, money, possessions, children, whatever. Very, very few are really interested in spirituality.

And this is the way it should be. If everyone became spiritual and lost interest in the world all our society would grind to a halt. This is

why the yoga that teaches you to go out into the jungle is not meant to be taught to everyone, and why I have not been able to find language foul enough to express how I feel about the so-called yogis, swamis, and godmen that India has been exporting to the West to teach spirituality. Yoga is not a system of physical jerks; know it once and for all. Yoga is meant to make every home a happy home. When every family member is giving out his or her best to unite the family and make it a success, that is real Yoga. And I don't mean the family you were born into or married into, necessarily. Whoever you live with is your family. As we say in Sanskrit, *vasudeva kutumbam*: we are all members of God's family.

So when people come to me for instruction I don't tell them to do exercises or to pay priests to do some rituals on their behalf or to go on pilgrimage or anything else like that. I tell them to first clear up their personal lives. Most people are not destined to become truly spiritual in this lifetime and there is no use in trying to force them to; they will just become miserable. If they are downright materialistic, well, I always say, "For those who believe in God no proof of His existence is necessary; for those who do not believe in God no proof is possible." If they are partly materialistic and partly spiritual, the true guru will see that they marry happily and live contentedly and observe simple spiritual practices. This will ensure their progression for future lives. The ones who are destined for it, the ones who have already done plenty of preparation in past existences, will be taught fully.

The guru does not need his physical body to guide you, remember. He may use other teachers, or he may work directly through Nature. The first year of my life I took mother's milk; the next five years, nothing but cow's milk. For the next eight years I lived on nothing but three fistfuls of chickpeas. I would soak them overnight in water and then take one fistful morning, afternoon, and evening. No one told me to do it; it just seemed to me to be the right thing to do. Then for three and a half years I ate nothing but green chilies and water. When I finally started eating what people would call "normal" food I began by taking only raw vegetables because I wanted something crunchy, something to bite; you know how animals always prefer their food to be raw. For twenty-three years I never tasted salt, just because I didn't want to.

One day during my boyhood I was standing alone doing nothing in particular when suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, I heard a *mantra*. I liked it and started to repeat it. No one told me to do so, but I got such a good feeling from it that soon I was repeating it most of the time. You see how Nature works?

When I was in the first year of college my classmates and I went to

Benares on a university tour. I met two saints while I was there. One was Bhaskarananda Saraswati, the sadhu who predicted to Lady Willingdon that she would become Vicereine of India. When this occurred he was honored with a formal reception by the grateful lady. Imagine: a naked ascetic, walking through a cordon of honor composed of troopers with drawn swords!

The other saint I met was Telang Swami. He has now left his body, after a life of more than 370 years. He weighed about 300 pounds, and he had short white hair and a short beard; he never had anything to do with clothing except for a 1,008-bead rosary. He is the only person in the history of Benares ever to perform a ritual bath of Kashi Vishveshvara, the presiding deity of Benares, with his own urine and feces. When he did this one of the temple priests was so outraged that he came over and slapped Telang Swami, who didn't bother in the least about it and merely went off. That night the King of Benares saw Kashi Vishveshvara in a dream. The god told him, "Telang Swami is my very essence; how dare anyone insult him?" The next day the King tried to locate the priest to punish him, but learned he had died suddenly during the night. Telang Swami was a wonderful aghori.

When I met him, he motioned to me to come over and sit next to him—he never spoke for almost 100 years—and he started playing with my hair and rubbing the back of my head. I left, and I don't know what he did to me but back in Bombay I began experiencing some queer things. One night Telang Swami came to me in a dream and requested me to return to Benares to visit him again, which I did. At that time I had no inkling of the nature of the relationship between us; later when I met my Junior Guru Maharaj I learned that Telang Swami was his disciple. This made us guru-brothers, and in his magnanimity he was helping to prepare me for what was to happen next.

After some time, a few of my classmates took me to see a Jain ascetic by the name of Jina Chandra Suri. The old man peered at me and, after a close inspection, requested me to bring my horoscope to him the next day. I did, and, after carefully perusing it, he inquired about my willingness to learn astrology, palmistry, and physiognomy from him. I don't know what made me agree, but I agreed, and I studied with him for three years. He taught me how to construct *yantras* and perform rituals; I enjoyed it.

One day he casually asked me to accompany him on a trip outside Bombay. He took me to Janakpur, up in the erstwhile Darbhanga State which is now part of Bihar. I thought we were just on a holiday, and for two or three days I had a fine time. The villagers were very hospitable, and I enjoyed a good rest.

On the new-moon night, though, everything went wrong. Jina

Chandra Suri came and met me and started speaking very sweetly to me. I wondered what had come over him. There was certainly no need for such ingratiating behavior. I now know he was just fattening me up for the kill, because after all the preliminaries he told me, "Now you are going to do *shava sadhana*."I had no idea what he was talking about. When I asked him, he explained that a fresh corpse, or *shava*, had been obtained and that I was to sit on the corpse and perform a ritual. Apparently he had looked into my horoscope and realized that I could succeed at this sort of sadhana. He must have planned out the whole drama over the previous three years.

Well, I told him I had no intention of doing anything like sitting on a corpse and performing sadhana. I had done some yoga before, but our family worships Krishna, and for us it is unthinkable to have anything to do with dead bodies or spirits or anything like them.

Besides, since childhood I could never see a corpse without breaking out in a sweat and falling into a faint, all because I so strongly self-identified with the dead individual. Once or twice when I was out driving I met a funeral procession and actually lost control of the car and allowed it to run onto the footpath; it was very dangerous. So I couldn't even imagine what would happen to me were I to sit on a corpse.

Jina Chandra Suri started to try to convince me, but I was adamant. Finally he lost his temper; it was the first time I had ever seen the old man get angry. He told me, "If you refuse to do it, I'll perform the ritual myself on your corpse!"

I flared up: "Who do you think you are threatening?" I assumed he was talking through his hat. To show he meant business he motioned to a group of drunken tribals who were standing nearby, holding knives, clubs, and other weapons. At his signal they walked over and surrounded me.

I was really in a fix. If I did the sadhana there was a very good chance I'd die of sheer terror, or because some spirit would catch hold of me, or maybe the deity Herself would decide to take me as a sacrifice. But if I didn't do it, it was definite I would die. I decided that if I was going to die either way then I might as well perform the ritual, since there would be at least some minor chance of survival that way.

When I informed the old man that I would do it he immediately brightened up and became cheerful again. He started explaining the details of the ritual to me: how to position the corpse, how to sit on it, how to tie the lifeless thumbs and toes. Then he made me drink a full bottle of country liquor. I am the son of a Hindu merchant, and until that moment in my life I had never even touched an egg, much less a piece of meat or a drop of alcohol. But there was no choice; I took a

big pull from the bottle. My God! I thought my throat was on fire! Tears came to my eyes; after all, it was my first time. Jina Chandra Suri was so overjoyed by my agreeing to do the sadhana that he became very solicitous about my condition. Seeing the effect of the moonshine on me he was so concerned he actually picked up the bottle and started feeding it to me a little at a time.

By the time I had finished the whole bottle all my fear had gone. This was the first time I had ever felt real fear in my entire life and, let me tell you, I was really scared. The only thing left for me was to foul my pants, I was so desperate. I was sweating, my hands were shaking, I was overwhelmed with terror. By the end of that bottle, though, I had lost every iota of my fear. I had made up my mind that I would either succeed at that sadhana or die trying: there was no way out. Challenge and response, the law of the jungle. I was ready.

This is the beautiful effect of alcohol: you never fear or hesitate once you've taken it. It has a number of side effects, no doubt, and very few people use it for the right purposes. But for certain practices it is essential. It was really a good thing that I drank that moonshine, because it helped me out in several ways.

Then I was taken to the corpse. It was that of a young girl of about fifteen, very pretty. She belonged to a tribe whose members pressed oil from seeds to earn a living. She had been dead only a few hours and was so lovely that I forgot the ritual, the danger, the fear, and everything else and started thinking only of her. She was beautiful in the way only primitive people can be beautiful. Not an ounce of excess fat, not a wrinkle on her skin. Her thighs? Solid like trees. Her breasts? Absolutely firm. I found myself wishing she were still alive so I could take her off alone to a quiet place and we could enjoy together. I was even ready to marry her, she looked so lovely. This was not necrophilia or anything perverted; I was just very drunk and I was sorry she was dead and unable to play about with me. I am telling you the truth about all this so you'll have some idea of what it was like.

While I was drinking they had taken her to the appropriate spot and pointed her head in the correct direction. Jina Chandra Suri, who was looking very pleased with himself, handed me an object and explained: "I am giving you my yantra which I worshiped for forty years in Assam. It will take care of you. There is nothing to worry about. I am going to sit over there," he said, motioning to a spot about a hundred yards away, "and repeat mantras for your protection."

He then took a black thread and did *kilana* in a big circle around me. *Kila* means "nail", and kilana is meant to "nail off" or seal off an area to prevent any trouble-making spirit from disturbing your concentration. So long as you remain within the circle you are safe.

The moment you step outside the circle you've had it: you become a spirit yourself unless there is some ethereal being nearby who can come to your rescue, which is highly unlikely.

After the kilana the old man told me which mantra to recite, gave me a *japamala*, or rosary, to count the repetitions, and shoved a dish of raw meat and a bowl of wine in front of me.

The idea was that when the Goddess appeared, in the form of an animal, I should offer the meat and wine to please Her. Satisfied with my worship, She would tell me to ask for a boon and I should reply, "Do whatever my guru says to do," meaning Jina Chandra Suri. This was all the old man's idea of course and I had no intention of saying anything like that. First I wanted to see whether or not the sadhana would actually work, and then if it did I would think about what to ask Her for.

Jina Chandra Suri walked off and sat down to start doing *japa* (recitation of mantras) for my protection, and I knelt on the corpse in the manner I had been shown. The supine girl's mouth was open and had been filled with oil. The old man had showed me how to make a wick of raw cotton, and I lit my wick from one of the torches the tribals were carrying. Since it was a new moon night there was absolute blackness except for this lamp, and I could see nothing but the poor girl's face, which looked ghastly, grotesque in the flickering light of the flame. All my previous desire for enjoyment with her melted away as I peered down into her open, fixed, unstaring eyes. Both of us were stark naked, and her cold body underneath mine caused a sort of creepy feeling to spread through my body and mind.

Here again the alcohol saved me. Being drunk I was able to shake off the dread and begin my japa, gazing full into her face to concentrate my mind there. The old man had warned me that if she tried to get up I should knock her down and pin her firmly, so I was intently watching for the least twitch or flinch in her body to alert me to the danger. I suppose this is the most terrifying part of shava sadhana, because it is an immense strain on your nerves if the corpse suddenly tries to sit up and begins to growl and scream at you. Many people have died of fright at this stage. One old fellow died right in front of me. He was trying to show off and challenged me to a contest. We procured two corpses. The idea was to see who could bring life into one most quickly and control it most firmly. I warned him that he was too old to be trying such stunts, but he was beyond reasoning with. As soon as the corpse started to sit up and he tried to control it, the spirit which had been forced to sit in the corpse caught hold of him. His nerves failed, his heart failed, and he died.

But I didn't have this problem on that first night, which is good since otherwise I probably would not be sitting here telling you this

story now. I sat and did my japa. I don't know how many I did, but it can't have been too many before I suddenly began to get a very eerie, extremely queer feeling, and I saw a pair of eyes watching me from the darkness.

The animal, a jackal, approached me, snarling and baring its teeth. I don't know what came over me—it must have been the alcohol, because I was so drunk I didn't care for man or beast—but I became furious. I forgot everything I had been told to do, I forgot the wine and meat I was supposed to offer. I reached out of the circle which had been drawn on the ground to protect me and I grabbed the jackal. I was really incensed, and said to it: "So, you want blood, do you? Take this!" And I stuck my hand into its mouth. That liquor really did me immense good; I don't know what I would have done without it.

The Goddess, who was temporarily in the form of the jackal, was interested only in blood. One of the beast's teeth pricked my hand between the thumb and index finger, and the jackal licked up the drop of blood that oozed out—and then all of a sudden there was Smashan Tara standing before me, smiling, asking what I wanted from Her.

Tears come to my eyes whenever I remember that scene. For years the scar remained on my hand as a reminder of the night when I was there in that *smashan* (cremation ground) sitting on that corpse, and I caught my first glimpse of Smashan Tara. I don't know what your condition would be if you were to catch sight of Her. You might even die of shock. She is very tall, and Her skin is a beautiful deep midnight-blue color. Her eyes are beautiful; that's the only way I know to describe them. She has a long red tongue lolling from Her mouth. Blood, the blood She is eternally drinking, drips slowly from the tip. She is *ghatastani*, or pot-breasted, and *lambodari*, or full-bellied. Around Her neck there is a garland of freshly severed human heads which are freshly bleeding. She wears wristlets and armlets of bones, and anklets of snakes. Her four hands grasp a pair of scissors, a sword, a noose, and a skull. She wears a skirt of human arms, and to me She is one of the loveliest beings in the universe, because She is my Mother.

I suppose I should have been frightened at this terrific vision, but actually when I saw Ma for the first time I felt as if I had known Her before, perhaps in some previous birth, and that this was just a continuation of that previous sadhana. I am sure this is the case because otherwise it would have been impossible for me to achieve so quickly.

Anyway, She asked me what I wanted and I told Her "Look, I never did this for myself. I never wanted to do anything like this. That fellow sitting over there made me do it. I don't want anything except to go back to Bombay."

“Don’t worry,” Tara assured me, “I’ll see that you get to Bombay, but first you have to ask for something.”

“But I don’t want anything except to go back to Bombay.”

“But you have to ask for something,” Tara insisted, smiling.

“Just get me out of here first. Take me to Bombay and then I’ll ask for something.”

Tara laughed and told me to close my eyes. I did, and when I opened them again I was in my bedroom in our family mansion in Bombay, soaked in sweat from fear and shock. I was stunned for at least fifteen minutes and did not even know where I was. I walked from room to room like a zombie, trying to convince myself I was really back home. Gradually I realized that I had indeed returned to Bombay, and that thought gave me some relief. I was still drunk, so there was nothing to do but go to sleep.

When I woke up at 11 a.m. I had a terrible hangover. I didn’t know then it was a hangover, of course, because I had never experienced one before. All I knew was that my head was splitting open, bursting at the seams. I called my servant Dhondu and told him to bring me some Bayer aspirin. It came as a powder back then, so I took two teaspoonsful, and after half an hour or so I started sweating and my headache disappeared.

I felt good enough to start planning my revenge on Jina Chandra Suri for daring to lie to me about the purpose of our jaunt and getting me into such a situation: “I’ll never see his face again. No—I’ll butcher him. Let him return to Bombay and we’ll see how long his head remains on his shoulders.”

Thinking in this way, I suddenly remembered the yantra and rosary which were still with me. I said to myself, “Wait, I’m safe here in my own home. Let me try this out.” There was some doubt in my mind that I had imagined or dreamed the whole thing. Just as an experiment I sat down and started doing japa. I had not finished even one hundred repetitions when Tara appeared in front of me again and asked me what I wanted from Her. I said, “Ma, I really never had any intention of doing shava sadhana, and I don’t want anything.”

Again She smiled and said, “Ask Me for something.” When Ma wants to give you something She creates a situation that will force you to accept it. I finally had to tell Her, “Ma, I never wanted any of this, but now that I’ve succeeded I would most like for You to come to me every day and permit me to worship You.”

She said, “But I can’t come here. You will have to go daily to the smashan.”

And that is just what I did. At that time Bombay was not so crowded as it is today, and the smashans were very lonely places. I

began with the Worli smashan. A friend of mine would drive me there every night and wait in the car while I did my work. I had arranged for a man to provide me with fresh coconut water nightly. After offering it to Ma, I would drink the rest as Her *prasad*, a gift from Her to me. There was an old fakir, a Muslim ascetic, named Mishkin Shah, who lived nearby and who knew why I visited the place nightly. After we met we became good friends and I would have tea with him every night.

Ma would come to me nightly and we'd talk. After some time, when I knew Her better, I asked Her to show me all Her forms: Chinnamasta, who carries Her head in Her hands and drinks Her own blood as it gushes from Her neck; Bagalamukhi, who has the head of a crane, or heron; and all the rest of the Great Goddesses. Many rituals were involved to succeed at the sadhanas for them all. I also had to perform shava sadhana twice more, each time with a different technique. For instance, the second time I did shava sadhana I did it on the corpse of a man instead of a woman, and the third time I did it on the corpse of a woman who had died while pregnant.

Jina Chandra Suri was not there to "assist" me those next two times I did shava sadhana. A few days after my experience in Janakpur he returned to Bombay and came to meet me. He began by praising me: "I am so pleased with you, my boy. I knew you could do it from the first time I saw your horoscope. Now do just as I say and we'll be able to collect plenty of money from all the maharajas and merchants."

I told him, "I will do nothing of the sort. You forced me to go and do a sadhana which I never would have done willingly. I will allow you to leave with your life only because you introduced me to my Mother. I must show my appreciation to you for such a boon, even though your wicked, dirty mind had different plans for me. Were it not for this I would ask Her to make a nice mince of you, just as you had planned to do to me. Now please get out."

First he pleaded a little. Then when he saw I was intransigent he got wild: "I'll perform a death ritual on you!"

I lost my temper, but I just laughed in his face and said, "Now I spend twenty-four hours of the day in the lap of my Mother, so your puny threats do not worry me at all. But my Mother may not like to hear you abusing Her son; I suggest you keep quiet."

This only infuriated him further: "Give me back my yantra!" he shouted. I told him firmly, "I am not going to give you anything. It is time for you to leave," and I had him bodily ejected from my house. And what happened? Sometime thereafter he raped a teen-aged girl, and that was the end of all his spiritual power. Thereafter he earned his living by making yantras for rich Jain merchants, charging them

10,000 or 15,000 rupees each.[1]

We kept up our relationship, however. I guess it was because he had worshiped Smashan Tara for forty years and knew Her power, and he probably still thought he might be able to get some benefit from Her through me. Sometimes he would come and meet me at my house, but the connection between us was strained.

He was unique, really, in his own way. As far as astrology, palmistry, and physiognomy are concerned, he was a master. He had been able to dig up a number of buried treasures and texts. I have never met anyone in this world who could exceed his ability to make other people rich. “Why do you want to waste your time on spiritual things?” he would always tell me. “Do your penance, then cash in on it, make money, and enjoy your life. You are from a merchant’s family, which means you are meant to make money, not be spiritual. Spirituality is for Brahmins.” He himself had owned tea estates earlier in his life and had fallen in love with an English girl, the daughter of a fellow tea planter. Everyone was against them and succeeded in breaking up the relationship. He was so disgusted with the whole situation that he left everything and became an ascetic.

Although he had worshiped Smashan Tara for forty years he never dared try to perform shava sadhana himself; he knew he could never succeed. He did attempt to make one Ratibhai do shava sadhana, but as soon as Ratibhai reached the smashan he got such a fright that he fouled his pants and then fainted. He has not fully recovered from the effect, even today.

Unfortunately for Jina Chandra Suri, I was a very different sort and paid no attention to him. I was listening only to my Mother, Smashan Tara. It is only by Her grace that I have achieved whatever I have achieved in this life.

I never told Ma that he should rape that little girl, mind you. I don’t like rape; it makes me furious. It is one of the three acts which supposedly can’t be atoned for or forgiven, along with murder of your guru and gambling. What happened to Jina Chandra Suri was that Ma withdrew Her protection from him, and his mind was overcome with desire. He could have satisfied his desire in other ways, but he could not restrain himself and this is what resulted. And besides, there must have been some karmic connection there, otherwise there never would have been an opportunity for him to be alone with her long enough to rape her. Had this old man been in his senses he could have postponed the repayment of this karmic debt for some future lifetime, but because his balance of mind was lost, his natural underlying lust which had been suppressed all those years suddenly spurted out. It is a fine thing to collect great spiritual power, but you are headed for trouble if you ever lose control over it.

You know, one person may do sadhana for years and years and still get no result, whereas someone else may only do a very small amount of penance and get a very great result, as was the case with me and my shava sadhana.

It looks unfair, doesn't it? But the person who achieves easily in this lifetime must have spent many, many lifetimes of tough austerities, just as Kalidasa did, to reach the point where only a small further effort will bring results. Someday I'll tell you the story of Kalidasa. Right now, I have a better story for you. Listen!

One time an aghori decided to perform shava sadhana. Naturally he couldn't do it in the city because the people there would be scandalized and would accuse him of black magic and attack him. To avoid this he procured a corpse, carried it out into the deep jungle, sat on top of it, and began to do his japa.

A woodcutter happened to pass nearby and, seeing the aghori and the corpse, took fright and climbed a tree to hide. While he was in the tree the woodcutter overheard the mantra which the aghori was repeating. He was repeating it aloud to improve his pronunciation, which was proof he was still raw, because a real aghori never speaks a mantra aloud.

Suddenly from out of nowhere a tiger appeared and with one cuff from its paw killed the aghori. Immediately it began to lap up the freely flowing blood. Tigers always do that to a fresh kill. While it was busily engaged in slaking its thirst for blood, the tiger was frightened by a sound nearby and plunged into the deep underbrush.

The woodcutter well knew that a tiger always returns to its kill, but he had become curious about the whole thing and, despite the danger, came down from the tree to investigate. Then he wondered to himself, "Why shouldn't I try this out?" He sat on the fresh corpse of the aghori and started to repeat the mantra he had overheard. After less than a hundred repetitions the deity suddenly appeared in front of him and said, "Ask for a boon!"

The woodcutter told Her, "Ma, I have only done this out of curiosity."

Ma told him, "That doesn't matter. What does matter is that I have come to you. Now ask for something."

He said, "All right then, tell me which law states that this fellow should not succeed even after long penance and that I should achieve within seconds?"

Ma smiled and said, "Close your eyes." When he did he saw that he had been doing this same sadhana for the past ten births. Ma continued: "Do you understand now? If you hadn't done this before, how could you have remembered the mantra? How would you have

developed the courage to attempt the sadhana knowing the tiger would return at any moment? I was the tiger who killed this aghori. I made him come here, where I knew you would be waiting. I gave you the intelligence to remember the mantra and do the sadhana. You had only a few japas left remaining from your past birth for you to get *siddhi*, and now you have it. This aghori must still go through two more lives before he gets an opportunity like this. Now ask me for something!"

The woodcutter said, "Ma, all that I desire is that you should keep me forever in Your sweet gaze." In that instant, he was made.

When I said he was made, I mean he obtained siddhi. Not *Kaya Siddhi*, which is immortality, or *Maya Siddhi*, which is control over the mundane world. When you have one of these, of course, you have the other as well. No, I mean the siddhi of having Ma with him twenty-four hours a day. Ma took possession of him. Not of his body, because if She had come for his body he would have become immortal. She possessed his mind; She plugged him into the Universal Computer so that he was able to get answers for any question and could continuously play about with Her.

Ma came to me in the same way. Only because of the efforts of my past lives did I get the desire to study with Jina Chandra Suri; I could have easily refused. And unless I had done it in some previous existence, I would never have agreed to do shava sadhana, even under threat of death. Ma wanted me to do it, that's all. And what I have gained by succeeding at Her sadhana is beyond speech. She taught me how to move around in my subtle body; She made me clairaudient and clairvoyant. I can go anywhere in the world without leaving my chair; nothing can be hidden from me.

I am talking as if I do these things, but in fact it is beyond me to do anything. Only Ma can do it; She does it all. When someone who is afflicted by disease comes to me, Ma tells me the treatment. Sometimes She will tell me, "This person does not deserve to get well," or, "It is not in this person's destiny to be cured." Whereupon I ask Her, "Then why did you send this particular individual to me, if you didn't want them to be benefited in some way?" And then Her compassion flows and something incomprehensible occurs and the person is cured. I always pray to Her, "Ma, make me a leper, ruin me, do whatever You like but don't ever remove me from Your lap." And I know She hears me. This is the foundation of all my confidence in my abilities. Do I have any capabilities? Ha! Everything is from Ma.

My ideas are individual, no one else knows about them. People sometimes ask me, "How can you have learned so much in such a short span of sixty years?" I tell them, "I studied at Jnanaganj, at Manasasarovara." *Jnanaganj*: heap of knowledge. *Manasasarovara*: lake

of the mind. My knowledge is all *nijajnana*, knowledge from within, from Ma. My mentor has taught me a wonderful method of being able to tune in on knowledge from anywhere, with Ma's help.

Other people have wondered, "How can you treat someone as terrifying as Smashan Tara as your Mother?" They can ask such stupid questions only because they are ignorant. Once you know the meaning of the form in which you see Smashan Tara you will be able to understand why She is the Universal Mother.

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[1] About $1,000 to $1,500

CHAPTER TWO

SHAKTI

When I'm disgusted, fed up with the world, I always turn to my Mother. She comes to me in any form I request, and we play that way. Sometimes She comes as my Mother, sometimes as my wife, sometimes as my child. She's always with me; She'll never go away. Long ago we promised each other to stay together always. If She ever leaves me I will not live even an instant longer. Who is She? My ego, the Shakti which self-identifies with my body. If She leaves me, I have to die. Most people don't know the true value of the ego, and they misuse Her. But I think I am the luckiest man in the world, because my Smashan Tara has taught me all about my own ego, and how to realize Her as Adya, the Original Shakti. She *is the being to be realized.*

MAYA SHAKTI

MA IS THE SOURCE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, the source of both delusion and release from delusion. She is the foundation and supporter of this universe and of all possible universes. She is called Adya because *adya* means "that which is first and therefore eternal, which has no beginning and no end, which is ever-existent." This is the only way She can form the base of the cosmos. If She too were subject to creation and destruction, what sort of foundation would She be? No. She is beyond everything, and She is the source of everything.

Though She is without beginning and without end, She may exist in either the manifested or the unmanifested state. When manifested, She acts as the source of the universe in Her kinetic form; when the universe dissolves She becomes quiescent, She ceases to exist. Energy is equally energetic whether it is kinetic or potential; only its form differs.

And remember, you may eventually learn a few things if you work

hard enough, but you will never be able to discover the origin of the Universal Mother, Adya. You should not even try to find out about it, because it is not to be known. It is just not knowable. But when you become Ma Herself, then there is no question of any distinction between the knower and the known. How can there be any knowledge of Ma when you have become Ma Herself?

Ma, Shakti, Maya: These three words describe Her. But each emphasizes a different attribute. *Maya* is Her delusive aspect, Her capacity to bind one to limited forms. *Shakti* is Her aspect of power and energy. And *Ma*? *Ma* indicates Her maternal aspect, the Motherhood of God.

Everyone is afraid of Maya because her job is to entice, entrap, enthrall, to prevent people from escaping the cycle of birth and death. Why should they be afraid of Her unless they are not confident that they can resist Her blandishments? It is not as if She feels hatred or envy or any other selfish emotion for the beings She enslaves; how can She? She is just doing Her job.

All these so-called swamis who say that Maya is evil are absolutely wrong. How can She be evil? She is the Mother of all worlds. I shouldn't even call these charlatans swamis because *swami* means "owner" or "master." A real swami is the owner or master of himself, and if you are really master of yourself, Maya cannot have any effect on you and you would have no reason to fear or hate Her. These cheats make such a mess of a thing that it becomes difficult to untangle the mess and explain the reality. You must try to understand that Maya can exist only where there is duality. The universe is full of pairs of basic principles: male and female, positive and negative, active and passive. Our philosophy maintains that the Soul is only one, indivisible, in the state of *sat-chit-ananda* (existence-consciousness-bliss). But the Soul cannot enjoy itself unless there is some observer, someone who can perceive the Reality. Observers cannot exist when the whole universe is in a state of nonduality because all is one; no distinction between observer and observed would be possible. To satisfy this urge for an observer, Shakti projects Herself. This Shakti is Adya, the undifferentiated form, the totality of all universes. She is as unbounded and absolute as is the Universal Soul or *Atman*, and the only difference between them is that She feels Herself to be separated from Him, the male principle, the unchanging Atman, and this gives Her the impetus to try to locate Him and reunite with Him.

Adya is Herself unaware of how She projects. The whole projection is spontaneous because of joy, the overwhelming joy of existence or sat-chit-ananda. Because the process of this projection is unknown to everyone it is called Maya.

Eventually Adya Herself begins to become individualized. Within Her, separate egos develop and become individuals. At some point these proliferated forms begin to grope for the Ultimate, and then the Universal Soul gets the observers He had yearned for. Every individual begins this quest hesitantly, but every individual will one day or another reunite with the Unmanifest. Separately the Soul and Adya are impotent; together they create a beautiful play. When the play is over the projection is reabsorbed into the "projector" until the next cycle of creation. Isn't it wonderful?

People still ask me, "Why does Maya entice us if She is supposed to be part and parcel of the Divine Motherhood of God?" It is not so difficult to understand. Each man and woman are part of the Cosmic Male and Female Principles. In each human, buried down deep inside, is the remembrance of the indescribable bliss of Unity, of the joy which caused the projection in the first place. However, this originally pure impulse of joy must pass through the causal, subtle, and gross physical bodies, which are like sheaths surrounding the indwelling Soul. As the impulse passes through each sheath on its way to our waking consciousness, it is slightly refracted or perverted by our limitations. The purity is deflected slightly in each passage so that by the time the impulse becomes conscious it is more or less impure, depending on the individual. That is the true Maya: a pure impulse filtered down into our limited conscious minds which incites us to perform karmas which, in turn, tighten our bondage to the *samsara* (world of manifestation)

The individual personality, when it is overcome by joy, creates multiple thought waves which project for their own fulfillment. It is like the cosmic projection, but, because of impurities, it is limited. These thought waves are projected from the causal body as a result of past karmas and are therefore imperfect. Most people forget that these thoughts are simply temporary manifestations and they try to cling to them, or to avoid them altogether if they are uncomfortable. But if you know something about them you can choose the way that they are destroyed. That is why my mentor taught me that complete gratification of desire is the only way to become free of Maya. When all the imperfect projections are eliminated then only can you see the real thing.

Maya is very terrifying, it is true. In fact, to frighten is really the function of Maya. Maya will always frighten you, or try to, but She will never hit you if you try to come near. People are afraid they'll be finished if they leave off whatever they are doing in their lives: "If I lose all my money, what will become of me?" But everyone is going to be finished sooner or later. If you tell Maya, "I came into the world naked and I will go out naked. Do whatever you please, I don't care,"

then you can succeed at sadhana. A spiritual aspirant must be fearless, because then no harm can come to him; all danger arises from his own fear. This is especially true in Aghora. The spirits in the smashan will try to terrify you; and believe me, they know how to do it. So long as you keep your wits about you they can't do anything to you. One little doubt, though, and you are very likely to make a mistake in your sadhana, and even the slightest error may mean excruciating death, and then perennial membership in the fraternity of spirits.

Maya is the external garb of the universe. When a lady is well-dressed, ornamented, and made-up she may appear to be beautiful, but if you strip her naked you will be able to count all her flaws, scars, marks, excess hair, or whatever. When you see Maya, you must look underneath to find out Her real nature. A green mango is very pleasing to the eye but quite sour to the tongue. However, with a little discrimination you realize the green mango is just a stage in its development. And when you see the golden ripe mango you know it must be sweet. You must become aware of the impermanence of the green state and not rely on it to remain.

The projection is dynamic; thus it is called Shakti. Shakti is energy. It emanates spontaneously and is then controlled. Shakti must always be controlled, otherwise it is worthless or dangerous, just like uncontrolled electricity. Shakti is of value only when it has been conditioned. Lord Shiva is the conditioner, the male aspect of the Universal Soul. He is always depicted with three eyes. So long as His third eye is closed Maya can exist because then Shiva has but two eyes, duality; and Maya is the essence of duality. But when the third eye, the eye of *jnana*, transcendent wisdom, opens, He sees only unity. That third eye cannot differentiate in any way and so the cosmos, which can exist only through duality, must be dissolved. As long as Lord Shiva's third eye is open, nothing can exist but the undifferentiated condition. When it again closes then Shiva becomes subject to duality, and the cosmos can again arise.

And this is why Smashan Tara has three eyes. She is both the manifestation of duality and the possessor of jnana, so loving Her will never bring you grief. That is why She is called Tara: She makes you cross over the sea of duality and reach Unity. Tara will never fail you —far from it! But if you love Maya, who is pure duality, you will become trapped in the manifested world for millions of births to come. You have the choice of loving Maya or Ma, the superficial or the deep. You can't do both. Ma is never cruel; She always gives you what you desire. If you want Maya, Ma's skin, you get it. And Ma will see that you get it until you are satiated with it.

Ma believes in giving you what you want. She gives it directly from Her own being, because She is a Mother. A mother feeds her own

essence to her child in the form of milk. When you ask Ma for gratification of your mundane desires, that is just what you will get. She will keep you in the mundane world drinking the milk of Maya just as long as you ask to remain there.

If you dream of sex daily throughout your life it is likely that you'll be craving sex at the moment of your death too, so Ma will say, "All right, my child, if you want sex take as much as you can." And She will help you enjoy plenty of sex by seeing that you are born as a pigeon or a cock or a sparrow. And when you have had enough, when you are thoroughly satisfied, when you cry, "Stop it! Please stop it!" then Ma will make you move on to new things.

Ma wants you to learn your lesson. That is why you find a meat-eater reborn either as a predator or prey or as both in succession. Human beings cry a lot at funerals of their own kind but they have absolutely no thought for the sufferings of the animals they slaughter. They never hesitate to kill and eat. Just think, first they kill the chicken. Often they will cut its throat and let it bleed to death, which is a most painful way to die. Then it will be cleaned, cooked, and eaten, and if it happens to be tough everyone will curse it for not satisfying their palates. How many humans would give beautiful tender lean meat if they were slaughtered, dressed, prepared, and served?

Meat-eaters conveniently forget that animal mothers too love their children. Do they ever think of the agony a hen goes through when her chicks are slain in front of her eyes? Or a cow, the embodiment of motherliness, do they consider how much she suffers when she sees the slaughter of her beloved calf whom she has grown in her own body and nourished with her milk, whom she loves more than her own life? Do these so-called humans ever think of the terrible pain they cause to the mother cow? Could they endure their own children being murdered before their own eyes?

How is Ma to teach such donkeys? They are not true humans, whose intellect is subtle enough to self-identify with another being of a different species and experience its personal joys and sorrows. Ma has no alternative but to make them suffer as they have made other beings suffer, allowing the animals they have tortured to torture them in return. Fair's fair, after all. If I cut your throat in this birth you will have every right to cut mine in the next or in some succeeding birth. Experience is the best teacher and a fool will learn from no other.

Actually, Ma is not enticing us at all; we are enticing ourselves. We look at Ma and see what we want to see. All these deities are our own projections, and our existences are our own projections. If we project the desire for flesh onto Ma, She will provide us with flesh, whether it's for eating or copulation. That's why I say about most so-called

humans today that their entire cultural refinement consists of eating flesh and putting flesh into flesh. I believe instead in going beyond the skin, beyond the flesh, the bone, the marrow, and everything else, and getting to the essence.

If you want to progress spiritually you must forget everything except the face of the Mother. She will offer you the entire cosmos to make sure you have no desires left. But when you arrive at the stage where you can pass up all temptations, when you succeed, and She accepts you as Her own child, then you never again have anything to worry about. Once when Ma came to me She told me "I'll make you ruler of the world!" I laughed and said, "Ma, thanks to Thy grace I know some of my previous births, and I know I've already attained the most the world can offer. I don't need to do it again. All I want is Thee." And She smiled and accepted me.

KALI AND KALIDASA

Ma taught me well. She let me know about some of my previous births, the ones that mattered most to my present existence. But she didn't want me to learn everything at once. For a play to be well acted sometimes it is better that the actors have no idea of what they are doing. In this way they act out their parts with greater spontaneity and feeling. When you know who you are, it changes everything.

Kalidasa's poetry is taught in schools and colleges all over India, but only a few people know the story of his life, even though he was India's greatest classical poet. He was a great devotee of Ma, as his name suggests: "servant (*dasa*) of Kali." For nine incarnations he worshiped Ma, and he ended each life by sacrificing himself. He would cut off his own head and let the blood spill over Ma's feet out of his intense love for Her. In his tenth birth he was born amazingly stupid and horribly ugly. He couldn't even take proper care of himself much less worship the Goddess Kali. He was a woodcutter, and since everyone knew what a dud he was, they would take advantage of him by buying his wood for two rupees when the other woodcutters would sell the same quantity for ten. But he was happy to have plenty of customers, and he had enough to eat so he was satisfied.

Now, the king of the country had a daughter who was as clever as she was beautiful, and when the time came for her to marry she announced that she would only marry the man who could defeat her at debate. Anyone who tried and failed would be executed. Many princes saw her face and fell in love with her and all of them were beheaded when they failed to out-argue her.

One day the king lost his temper and decided to teach her a lesson. He called for his minister and told him to locate the stupidest man in

the kingdom, saying, “I am going to marry my daughter to him!”

The minister knew better than to protest, so off he went in search of the stupidest man in the kingdom. It did not take him long to locate Kalidasa, who was busily chopping off the branch on which he was sitting when the minister walked by. He told Kalidasa that the king wanted to meet him.

Kalidasa said, “Why? I haven’t done anything wrong. Why should I meet the king?” This is the way he used to talk; he was something like a fakir, always in his own mood.

The minister said, “No, no. The king wants to meet you to present you with something.” When Kalidasa replied, “If the king is so anxious to meet me, he can come here,” the minister ordered the two soldiers who had accompanied him to grab Kalidasa and drag him to the palace.

When the king saw Kalidasa he was amazed that such a stupid man could exist. He told him, “I want you to marry my daughter.”

Kalidasa said, “Why should I marry your daughter? There are plenty of other girls in the kingdom to choose from.”

The king was not amused and said, “If you don’t agree to marry my daughter your head will be chopped off.” Kalidasa shrugged his shoulders.

During the wedding ceremony the princess was veiled so she couldn’t see her husband properly. Afterward she went to the bedroom which had been prepared for the honeymoon. It was a beautiful rainy night, with a light drizzle falling as she looked out the open window. It was the rutting season and many of the forest animals were giving full throat to their mating calls. She saw her husband sitting quietly nearby and thinking him to be shy she considered how to awaken in him the urge for love play. Just then a camel delivered his peculiar rasping mating call, and she coyly asked her husband, “Who is calling for his mate?” Her idea was that he should realize she wanted him to come to her like the animals do, for sex.

The Sanskrit word for camel is *ushtra*, but even that single word was beyond the ability of poor Kalidasa to pronounce and he replied, “Utru, utru.” At that instant the princess lost all her erotic intoxication and thought to herself, “Can my father have really done this to me?” Then she said to Kalidasa, “You can’t speak Sanskrit; you can converse only in degraded language. And you couldn’t even comprehend the reason for my question. Get out! You are not fit for me.” For the first time in his life Kalidasa felt hurt and insulted. It was all Ma’s doing, of course; She was calling him. He was so disgusted with his condition that he left the house and wandered into a Kali temple. He started beating his head against the feet of the image—remember the

influence of his nine previous births—until a few drops of blood fell onto the Goddess's feet. That was enough; the Goddess Kali appeared outside the temple and banged on the door. "Let me in," She cried, "I am Kali! Ask for anything!"

Kalidasa got up and stood behind the door so She wouldn't be able to open it and shouted, "I don't trust you!" He had suddenly become vaguely aware of his previous births, and now he was afraid that Kali would again refuse to save him.

Kali said, "No, you don't understand! Trust me!"

Kalidasa said in a hurt voice. "No, why should I trust you? I trusted you nine times before and look at me now!"

Ma said sweetly, "Trust me. Just open the door a crack and see that it is really your Kali."

Kalidasa said, "I will stick my tongue out the door, that's all." And when he did, Ma struck his tongue and immediately he received divine speech. Not only that; but he became tall and handsome. You may not believe that; I don't care. But it's true. From that time forward Ma was with him twenty-four hours a day. Spontaneously, a beautiful verse in praise of Ma fell from his lips.

When Kalidasa returned to the palace, no one recognized him. But it was easy enough to gain entry to the king by reciting a poem. Back then kings loved poetry. So Kalidasa recited a poem praising the great beauty of the princess. He described the wrinkles in her hips when she turned, her high projecting breasts, the curvature of her waist, her navel. Kalidasa is famous for his similes and metaphors, so he compared each part of her body to an appropriate image from nature. And during the recitation itself the king's daughter happened to come onto the women's balcony behind the throne, and when she beheld Kalidasa she instantly fell in love with him.

When Kalidasa lifted his eyes and saw the princess, he didn't bother to speak; he expressed his emotions with a look and a smile. What subtlety there is in the old ways of expression! When the princess saw this, she could no longer control herself and she said to her father, "I must marry this man; he is the only man in the world who is fit for me!"

The king indignantly replied, "Do you realize what you are saying? You are already married."

The princess said, "I don't care, I must have this man."

Imagine the surprise in the court when Kalidasa said quietly, "I am your husband." Kalidasa thanked the king for giving him his daughter in marriage. The king in turn offered Kalidasa vast lands, which were politely declined. Then the princess came down to her father's throne and in front of the entire assembly kissed her father and said, "I thank

you, father, for having given me a husband worthy of my qualities." And the king, heaving a sigh of relief, was vindicated for marrying his daughter off to that poor "idiot" Kalidasa.

Kalidasa left that kingdom and went to Ujjain, where he embellished the court of King Vikramaditya. Do you know his poem *Meghaduta* ("Cloud Messenger") in which a lonely *yaksha* (powerful ethereal being) pines for the wife who has been separated from him? Kalidasa based that poem on the experience of his wedding night. In his previous condition he had been unable to express all the misery of his rejection. But thanks to the grace of Ma he took his unfortunate experience and converted it into sublime verse. If he had not been ignorant in the beginning he would never have been selected to marry the princess, he would never have been driven by desperation to pound his head on the rock, and he might never have been saved by Ma so that he could win the princess back. Ma wanted him to live for a while in the world and provide us with his sublime poetry. Suppose he had realized Her right away; would he have had the idea to get married and live a householder's life? Never. The bliss of living with Ma is billions of times greater than all mundane pleasures. She wanted to entangle him partially in Her Maya and then to save him, so that while he was working out his entanglements he would amaze the world as Her tongue, Her mouthpiece. At other times Ma will let someone worship Her for years until circumstances force that person to relinquish the bondage of Maya, and then She comes to him. It is all Her play.

VIDYARANYA

About 600 years ago a great devotee of Ma named Vidyaranya helped to establish the South Indian empire of Vijayanagaram and served as prime minister of that empire for many years. It came to pass that in the course of time Vidyaranya was ruined. He lost his position and was reduced to almost nothing. All his power and most of his wealth were taken away, and as a result his family began to hate and abuse him. He became so fed up with every thing that he decided to renounce the world and become a hermit.

He went out into the forest and made a pledge to this effect. Then he worshiped Ma one last time. At the height of his power, the zenith of his glory, he worshiped with the best items available. Solid gold dishes were set aside for Ma's use, priceless jewels adorned Her, She was offered only the choicest foods. Now, reduced to poverty, he could do nothing but prepare unleavened bread out of mud and offer it to Her saying, "I'm sorry, Ma. Now I have nothing, and I can no longer worship you as I did before."

Suddenly Ma stood before him, and said, “Speak your wish.” He looked at Her quizzically and said, “Ma, what are You talking about? If You had really wanted to give me something You should have arrived five minutes ago. Then I could have accepted something. Now I have vowed to renounce worldly things, so I don’t want anything, not even You. I want only God.”

Ma smiled at him and said, “Don’t you understand yet? Close your eyes.” When he did, he saw mountains and mountains of ashes—and a small pile of something that was still emitting smoke. He still couldn’t understand, so Ma explained it to him: “You have been worshiping me for many years,” She said, “and by my grace all the karmas of your previous births have been burned to ashes except that little pile, which is all that remains. If you had not lost your position you would never have renounced life, so it was essential for you to be ruined. Do you see?”

Vidyaranya did full prostration to Her, and immediately went into a state of divine intoxication. Afterward, he wrote a famous Sanskrit treatise called *Jivanmuktiviveka*. *That* is what grace can do for you.

You see, when you have learned your lesson and have only the desire for Ma remaining in your heart, She will come to you. Then you have a chance to achieve. But when Ma does come to you, don’t ask for grace. Grace is Hers to give, according to Her own sweet will. You can’t get it on your own. Ask for compassion, learning, jnana, and when you get jnana you will know how to obtain grace.

SARVANANDA AND PURNANANDA

In the entire world so far only two people, when Ma came to them, asked for *sarvavidya*, the knowledge of each and every aspect of Shakti. One was Sarvananda Thakur of Bengal. I can’t tell you about the other. Sarvananda was a Brahmin, the son of the court astrologer of the king of Tripura. The astrologer was able to get a son only after long years of penance to Shiva, and the boy was actually something like Shiva incarnate, but he didn’t realize it until later.

One day when Sarvananda was still a young boy his father took him to the court to show him off to the king, in hopes of some largess because of his precocity. There was an assemblage of astrologers there in the court, debating on the lunar day. It was actually the new moon day, but when Sarvananda was asked he opined that it was the full moon day. This drew guffaws from the conclave of astrologers, and a slap from the embarrassed father, who was concerned about his position and how to save his face. He forgot that his son was the gift of Lord Shiva; would he have dared to slap Shiva?

The boy became angry and ran home. His old servant, Purnananda,

saw the condition of his young master and, wiping his tears, consoled him a bit. Then Purnananda sent the boy out into the jungle with a knife to gather palm leaves onto which he would copy part of some astrological texts and teach the boy himself. At that time all writing was done on palm leaves.

Sarvananda climbed a palm tree, carrying the knife, and let his anger boil over by slashing at the palm leaves. Meanwhile, Nature had sent an ethereal being of a very high order to look after Sarvananda. This Siddha took a physical body and then created an illusory cobra and sent it up into the tree in which Sarvananda was sitting.

When the boy saw the snake, all his anger focused on it: “So you want to bite me,” he said to the snake. “OK, but I’m going to cut you first. How do you like that?” And saying these words he hacked the snake in two by rubbing it against a sharp palm leaf. He then threw the pieces down at the base of the tree.

Now, the Siddha was sitting there, and when he felt the blood and flesh of the dead cobra fall onto his matted locks he said “Hm-mmm! What’s this? Come down here!” The boy descended, expecting the worst, but the Siddha merely stroked his head and said, “I know all about it, my boy, and I want to help you out.” Using the snake’s blood he wrote the details of the type of shava sadhana that if properly performed would please Ma.

Then Sarvananda returned to Purnananda and told him the whole story. Purnananda read the details and then told him, “This must be performed on a new-moon night, which is tonight. Let’s do this: we’ll go together to the smashan. You kill me and then sit on my corpse and do as I tell you. Then Ma will come and ask you what you want. Tell Her, ‘Please revive Purnananda and do as he says.’ That way Ma will appear to us both.”

That night they went to the smashan and the boy cut the old man’s throat and sat on his body, repeating the mantra given to him. After a few repetitions Ma appeared and asked the boy what he desired. He told Her as Purnananda had instructed him. She revived Purnananda and he too saw Her. Then She again asked, “What do you want?”

Purnananda replied, “All the so-called great astrologers ridiculed my boy for saying tonight was the full moon night. Preserve my boy’s honor!”

Ma smiled, and from the nail of Her little finger a ball of light emerged which was so bright that for miles around it seemed a full moon. All the astrologers back at the court were wonderstruck.

Sarvananda was just a child, innocent of the ways of sadhanas, but he was so overcome with love for Tara that he told Her “Ma, You have been so kind to show me Your form but I want to see You in all Your forms, all Your manifestations, because I want to know You

completely so I can love You properly." Tara smiled at him again and agreed. Sarvananda had no idea of the meaning of sarvavidya, but by asking for all the forms of Ma, sarvavidya was what he received. If Nature wants you to succeed at something a situation will be created whereby you will request the right thing, knowingly or not. Purnananda actually became Sarvananda's disciple and became a great pandit and scholar. It was in fact Purnananda's works that inspired the late Justice Sir John Woodroffe of the Calcutta High Court to introduce the subject of Kundalini to the West under the pen name of Arthur Avalon.

And Sarvananda? He became a householder and then one day he disappeared. No one knows what became of him.

Normally you will not even think to ask for sarvavidya; that is part of Ma's play. But even so when She gives you knowledge you become the expert, the gem in your own field.

THE MOTHERHOOD OF THE GODDESS

Sarvananda was very lucky. Because Ma came to him while he was still a boy he automatically treated Her like a mother. Only one person out of millions develops a desire to experience the Motherhood of God. There is nothing higher than the worship of the Mother because only the Mother can show the child the face of its Father. Just as its birth mother teaches a child the identity of its father, grandparents, and other relatives, even so the Divine Mother shows Her child the face of its Father: Shiva, the Universal Soul. That is why you should try to succeed at the worship of God with attributes first, and your chosen deity will then lead you on to the attributeless Ultimate Reality. Who is the source of all attributes, after all? Ma. Not all aghoris treat Ma as Mother, you understand. But I think it is wisest to do so. Always remember, to control any Shakti properly is not easy, and to control a Cosmic Shakti is almost impossibly difficult. To catch hold of Kali by the hair and tell Her, "Come to me right now!" is rather dangerous. That makes it a contest of wills, and, unless your will is stronger, Kali will frighten you into insanity or heart failure. Not because She hates you; oh no, She never hates anyone, though of course no one likes to be ordered around. No, She loves you and wants to play with you, but if an elephant wrestles with a mosquito, what will be the outcome?

If you treat Ma like your wife—and I'm not saying it's impossible; I knew one saint who did it, who projected his worship onto a statue of Ma and worshiped Her as his spouse, and eventually succeeded—and then one day find a human woman who seems attractive to you because of some connection from a past lifetime, you might suddenly

find yourself projecting your worship onto the Maya, onto the flesh and blood instead of into the essence. Because your worship has built up so much energy your descent into Maya will be all the deeper, and who knows how long it might take to drag you out?

The best way to treat Divine Shakti is as a Mother. It can save you from so many karmas also. If you look at all women as your mother would you ever think of raping or cheating or deceiving one? And if you see the Divine Mother in all beings can you ever intentionally injure anyone? No, and this automatically draws you away from the cycle of action and reaction. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa saw the Divine Mother in everyone, including even his own wife, and look what it did for him! You can go into all the world's religions, but nowhere can you find anything so sublime as our vision of the Motherhood of God. Christianity has it to some extent with the worship of the Virgin Mary, but the worship of the Mother has been perfected only in India because India is herself a mother. India has sheltered so many foreign races and religions, Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, Muslims, etc., and has allowed them to flourish in their own ways. Has any other country ever done this? Because of this, the cow is the symbol of India.

The cow is the perfect mother. She has four teats: one for her calf, one for guests including birds and animals, one for use in rituals, and one for her master. The milk is automatically divided into four equal portions; everyone is provided for. And the cow is passionately devoted to her calf, just as a real mother must be to her child. Sometimes the mere sight of the calf makes milk flow from the cow's udders; not drip, flow. I have seen this more than once when I owned a dairy. And if the calf dies the cow refuses to give milk –unlike our water buffaloes who can be tricked with the head of a calf on a stick. The buffalo is the symbol of *tamas*, stupidity, dullness; the cow is pure *sattva*, mental brightness.

And not just buffaloes, even your Western cows will give milk whether or not the calf is still alive. When I always say that this is the fundamental difference between East and West, I am not just talking through my hat. What is so great about giving milk? Other animals do it. The greatness in our Indian cows is that they give milk only out of an outpouring of love. That is the value of cow's milk. Won't at least a little of that love come through into the milk? It must. That emotion separates cows from other animals. So how are we wrong to worship cows? We are not worshiping the hide, hooves, and tail; we worship the essence. A few years ago, I read in the newspaper that an American cow suddenly devoured five dozen baby chicks who happened to be playing about in front of her. No Indian cow would do that; Indian cows mother little animals.

You know that Lord Krishna was called Gopala when he was a baby. Gopala literally means “protector of cows.” There are many esoteric meanings to this word, but even the obvious meaning is beautiful. Gopala was such a lovable little baby that all the cows in the vicinity loved him more than they loved their own calves. This is why I always say that you should treat God as your Mother. The baby is the best controller of Shakti because there is no desire, no desire at all except for the mother, and, therefore, the mother will be perfectly, continuously attentive to the child.

Always sit in the Mother’s lap. When you get out of Her lap and try to protect yourself She says, “All right, go on. Go ruin yourself.” How can you take care of yourself? You cannot. The Law of Karma is too big for anyone to tackle alone. But if you stay in the Mother’s lap and always rely on Her for everything you need She will always provide it. Can any real mother ever neglect her child, or not try to make it happy? So long as you treat Ma as your own Mother She will treat you as Her own child.

How does a mother know when her child is hungry? It cries. Whenever it cries in a particular way the mother knows, “Yes, time for feeding.” I know this from my own experience. When I am really angry, disgusted with the world, Ma comes to me and taps me on the shoulder, as it were, and says, “Forget all about that. Do you know … ?” And She proceeds to teach me something new, something I had never dreamt of, something so amazing that I become speechless and forget my anger completely. What compassion! Was there ever a mother such as She?

When the baby is not crying, however, its mother knows that its little tummy is full, and she does not bother about it. It is the same way in the world. As long as you are quietly enjoying your life as a human, Ma thinks, “Well, he is satisfied. Let him be. What use does he have for me?” And when you decide you are finished with life and want to get out of the unending cycle of birth and death, then there is only one thing to do: scream, cry out, demand that Ma should come and take care of you. And that is the only way that Ma will ever come to you. You have to desire Her much more than anything else—and there are so many obstacles to that in this dark age, in this Kali Yuga. But if you can identify yourself with the newborn baby, then what desires remain? A baby is too innocent to be aware of any but the simplest and most essential desires. In that state there is no question of temptation. If you give a baby a choice between a chocolate and a diamond, which will it take? The chocolate, of course. A diamond has no value for a baby. And if you learn that the world has no value you will never be tempted by anything and you will be able to avoid all the obstacles which crop up in Kali Yuga. But only a baby can do that.

That is why I love the baby Gopala and the baby Jesus so much.

You know, we Vedics believe that the same *rishi* who incarnated on the Earth as Rama, and later as Krishna, also incarnated as Jesus. We take Jesus as one of us. But look what has happened to Christianity, to the beautiful teachings of Jesus. So-called Christians have slaughtered so many millions in the name of Christ, when Christ preached that one must always turn the other cheek. But Jesus! His eyes! And the image of the Mother and Child: the baby Jesus playing with His Shakti. It is so sublime. Christians are just such fools to have received such a teaching and then to make such hash of it. But this is the thing, as Kipling said, "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." In a way he was right. We Easterners have value only for emotion. You Westerners, like your cows, are basically materialistic. There are of course exceptions, mind you. But when Nature Herself has created such differences in people, how can the one race understand the other? It takes a lot of effort.

THE VISION OF THE GODDESS

There is another good reason to become a baby in front of Ma. Babies love their mothers no matter how vicious or ugly they may be. To talk idly about Ma's form is one thing, but to actually see Her dripping with blood, Her fangs ready to devour you, is quite another. Your reaction to Her determines what She can do for you. If you don't react with fear, She will do anything for you, out of love. If you react with fear or disgust, She will become all the more fearsome and disgusting, and then where will you be?

Kali and all Her manifestations—Smashan Tara, Chinnamasta, Bagalamukhi, and the others—are not bad. No one wants to love them; everyone is afraid. Kali can't understand why everyone is afraid of Her. If you love Her enough, you will change Her natural destructiveness to such an extent that even the underlying thirst for butchery will vanish.

People think that Smashan Tara is the most terrifying of the Goddesses—and She is. One of Her names is Bhayankari, that is, "the Terrifier." But if you go to Her with a heart full of love for Lord Krishna, She becomes Radha, Krishna's greatest lover. If you treat Her as a mother, She loves you as a mother loves her child. But if you have no faith in Ma, the Great Goddess, and if you fail, then there remains nothing for you but to be born over and over again until you get it right.

You may go to an image of Ma and tell Her, "Wah, Ma, how lovely you are!" or "How frightening!" or whatever, but the emotion you feel is only a reaction to Her outer form. You must know what sort of

being you are worshiping if you ever want to develop a real relationship with Her, if you ever want to get underneath Her skin and reach Her inner being.

Without knowing Her inner being, how can you know Her? And before trying to go inside you must first understand Her external form, because it is actually your external form. The Atman or Universal Soul is the orb of the sun, and you are the reflection. Just as the moon can be reflected in thousands of pools of water at once, the Atman can appear in millions of humans and still remain aloof, untouched. Most humans are imperfect reflections because they are enmeshed in the Three Gunas, the three principal qualities of existence. If a lake is disturbed it cannot reproduce truthfully the image of the moon. But when it is calm the image is perfect. When you see Ma, you are seeing Her through the veil, the film of the Three Gunas, which explains why you cannot see Her in Her true form in the beginning.

Why is She blue? First ask that, and once you've understood it you'll be able to comprehend the rest. Why is the sky or the sea blue? If you pick up a handful of sea water, it is clear but the sea as a whole seems blue. Air is colorless, but the sky is not. These are optical illusions, and the fact that you see Ma—or even Krishna for that matter—as blue is also an optical illusion, because you are seeing them with your physical eye. Were you able to see with the divine eye, you would see something quite different. But to you now, Smashan Tara is *shyama*, a deep, rich, luminous, midnight blue.

Around Her neck is a garland of freshly severed human heads, what we call in Sanskrit a *runda mala*. There are eight grinning heads on this garland. They represent the eight 'nooses', the emotions which cloud the mind and incite one to perform karmas, thereby creating a tighter bondage to the ever-spinning wheel of birth and death. These eight nooses or snares, *pashas* in Sanskrit, with which you could hang yourself are lust, anger, greed, delusion, envy, shame, fear, and disgust. While you are in a state of ignorance you possess one or many or all of these emotions or grinning heads. Smashan Tara tells you, "I chop off your head to cure you of this malady, to free you from the grip of these snares." Most people, unfortunately, are so attached to their snares that they shrink from Smashan Tara in fear, thinking She wants to kill them. She does want to kill you: the false you, the limited personality which has accrued over so many births. You fear Her because you identify yourself with this mediocre personality when your true personality is something quite different. When She cuts off your head, your mind becomes firm, unwavering in its concentration, which enables you to succeed at Aghora sadhanas.

Smashan Tara is *ghatastani* or "pot-breasted." What is a more appropriate symbol of motherhood than the female breast?

Motherhood is inherent in all women. Take a tiny girl of two or three and give her a doll. How she will mother it! She will fuss over it, feed it, put it to bed; you will rarely find any boy who will bother so much about a doll. Women are meant to be mothers; the instinct is inborn. But it is only potential until the woman actually bears a child herself or adopts one. Then the motherliness fully manifests.

Even this realization does not develop spontaneously. It develops along with the child. In the case of humans, as the child develops in the womb, the mother's breasts enlarge and the nipples darken. The breasts actually double in size and weight during pregnancy. Milk also begins to form. The body is preparing food for the child even before its birth. Isn't Nature magnanimous? Most men see the breast and think of sex, but you'll ruin yourself if you try to treat Smashan Tara as your sex partner; you are just not strong enough to do so. Only a handful are. So you must realize She is coming to you as a mother, to love and protect you, and welcome Her in that way. She is *lambodari* or "big-bellied" because She consumes and digests all beings in the universe: She brings them into Her before sending them out again.

Around Her waist She wears a skirt of human arms, freshly severed. One of the Sanskrit words for hand or arm is *kara* which is related to the word *karma*. These arms represent all the karmas of all your millions of births. There are both left and right arms, so they include all karmas, auspicious and inauspicious. Most people clothe themselves in their karmas and She wants to cut them off, remove them from you completely. Why does She wear them as a skirt? Because they cover the navel and pubis. And are these not the two things for which the majority of karmas are performed, the belly and the genitals? Won't most people do anything for food and sex?

As anklets Smashan Tara does not wear silver jewelry, but tiny cobras. The cobra is always the symbol of the deceased ancestors. When you do sadhana you must always remember you are not doing it for yourself alone, but for all your progenitors, since had it not been for them you could never have taken a human rebirth. She tells you, "These are your ancestors who have come to me and taken the shelter of my lotus feet."

Smashan Tara has four hands. In one there is a skull which symbolizes the coating of the Three Gunas which surrounds the individual soul. The noose in another hand represents the noose which Yama's messengers of death use to snatch the living from the world. By seizing this noose from Yama, the king of the dead, She grants you the boon of immortality, because then there is no way for Yama to take you. With immortality comes fearlessness, since the basis of all fears is the fear of death. The third hand holds a pair of scissors, with which She cuts the three Gordian knots that bind you to embodied

existence. This is connected with Kundalini Yoga. And finally, in Her fourth hand She carries a sharp sword called a *khadga*, which is symbolic of the eternal play of destruction and creation of the universe. To you it means destruction of your doubts, your false ideas, and impressions. She strikes through them all with Her sword. And because people die of doubt, this ensures you will never die.

Finally, Her face. I think it's the most beautiful I have ever seen. She has lotus eyes. Remember, the lotus is the symbol of discrimination. And Her tongue lolls from Her mouth, dripping blood. All creatures, no matter how tiny, have some sort of blood-like substance. When She takes it from them She purifies the blood, as they say in Tantra, through the process known as *rakta shuddhi*. What this means is that She removes so many of the karmas which have forced the individual to be born into a particular womb that a higher rebirth is guaranteed. She actually alters the patterns of your personality, which is merely the aggregate of all your countless karmas in myriads of births. This is the *adhidaivika rakta shuddhi*, that is, Tara's purification of your personality.

When you have realized—not just mentally comprehended but realized through your own experience in sadhana—all the qualities of Smashan Tara, then She is no longer blue to you. She loses all color, all attributes. When you come and rest on Her lap, all your wrong ideas about Her are removed. You see Her as She really is. You can't see Her with the physical eye. In Sanskrit and most Indian languages the eye taken as a whole is a feminine noun, the eyeball is masculine, the pupil is feminine, and the retina, called the *pardah*, or curtain in Hindi, is masculine. So you see the dual nature of the external universe is mirrored in the physical eye. With the physical eye you cannot hope to see anything but duality. But when the 'curtain' is lifted you see the absolute, undifferentiated Reality, what we call in Sanskrit the *nirakara tattva*. Not even the shreds of distinction remain. Can a blind man tell the sex of someone in front of him? Only if he gropes. The state in which you see Smashan Tara in the nirakara form is *nirvikalpa samadhi*, self-identification with formlessness.

So, you begin with ignorance, unable to distinguish 'e-y-e' from 'I'. You see Smashan Tara in Her terrifying form because you are possessed of the eight nooses, of eons of karmas, and all the rest of the filth of your false personality, and She wants to disconnect it from you in the fastest way possible. Then, you see both you and Her as one; when all differences disappear, you cannot be different from Her. Finally, if you are meant for it, you again return to Her lap, and see Her in Her old form—but how different it will look to you then! You can't imagine it, you simply have to experience it. You go from duality to unity and back to duality, just as Paramahamsa Ramakrishna did.

My Tara always stands on Shiva, Who is deep in samadhi. One foot is flat on His body while the other is prodding Him, “Wake up! Wake up! Come dance with me.”

Why is Shiva in samadhi? Shiva here is actually *jiva*, the individual soul plus its coverings of the Three Gunas and all the rest. Because of the heavy overlay of karmas and gunas and what-have-you, the jiva is always in a state of deep sleep, unaware. When because of hard penances and stiff sadhana you realize Shiva, the jiva becomes Shiva. Then you can say, *Shivoham, Shivoham*: “I am Shiva, I am Shiva.” Then you see there is not the slightest difference between jiva and Shiva. Some gurus tell their disciples to repeat “Shivoham, Shivoham,” but it is really useless. They begin imagining they are Shiva without having any of His qualities.

Once Shiva awakens, He and His Shakti begin to dance together, and the dance ends with Her merging into Him again. When the projection of that Shakti occurs, Shiva sleeps because He has lost the part of Him that was aware of Himself, His true self. After Shakti wakes Shiva She ceases to exist. Your ego is simply your own personal Shakti, and only when your ego forgets all the eight nooses and the rest which force it to self-identify with the body (the physical e-y-e, eye) can it remember to identify with Smashan Tara. Then your transformed ego awakens Shiva (capital I) and the dance begins.

One final thing: Do you know why Smashan Tara is always depicted in the smashan near a roaring funeral pyre? It is not your physical body She is burning on that pyre, it is your causal body. She cremates all the billions of karmas filled in the storehouse which is your causal body, thereby freeing you from further obligation of being born in the world.

See Ma, evaluate Her from all Her facets, find out about Her yourself, and find out the way you can love Her best. Most humans are such idiots that they are terrified of Ma, because they are afraid to disengage themselves from their filth. You must see Her in Her playful form, Her terrifying form, all Her forms, and love Her.

CHAPTER THREE

SHIVA

The world considers You inauspicious, O Destroyer of Lust who plays in the smashan smeared with the ash from funeral pyres, wearing a necklace of human skulls, with ghouls for comrades. But for those who remember You with devotion, O Bestower of Boons, You are supremely auspicious.

Shiva Mahimna Stotra, 24

MAHAKALA

ONE DAY I SAID to Smashan Tara, "You are my Ma, my Mother, but who is my Father? I know the Mother always shows the child the face of its Father, so won't You show me mine?" We have a saying in Hindi: "Only your conscience knows all your sins, and only a child's mother knows its true father." Without Smashan Tara I could never have succeeded at the sadhana for Her Grand Consort, Lord Shiva. Tantrikas and Aghoris work this way: First they achieve success at sadhana for Shakti and then use that Shakti to move on to the Universal Soul, Shiva.

I spent three years at the Worli smashan in Bombay performing rituals before my Tara would finally agree to show me the sadhana for Mahakala, the Destroyer of the Cosmos. That sadhana was impossible to perform in Bombay. I went first to Neemtolla Ghat in Calcutta, and then I spent ten months on Manikarnika Ghat in Benares.

Manikarnika Ghat is called *Mahasmashan*, the Greatest Smashan. Not even one second passes there in idleness; there's at least one body burning at all times, around the clock. This has been going on for untold thousands of years. The fire which is used to ignite the pyres has been maintained continuously for centuries; it is never allowed to go out. People come from thousands of miles to Benaras just so they can die there and be burned on Manikarnika Ghat. Every day dozens of bodies arrive by train, the bodies of those who died outside Benaras

but yearned to be cremated there. There are too many bodies for them to burn down all the way to ash, so as soon as the skull pops open and most of the flesh is incinerated the priests recite the appropriate verses and push the corpse into the River Ganga to make way for another one. As soon as the body hits the river, packs of dogs fight each other for remaining morsels, and then the turtles and fish devour whatever is left. If you were to stay there ten months at a stretch like I did, and still not realize that you are going to die, well, then, there is no hope for you. You'll never realize it; you'll die in ignorance.

I used to sit there all day and all night. I would cook my rice in a fresh skull each day, without even cleaning out the bits of brain. The smashan is the ideal place for the worship of Lord Shiva because death is the eternal reality and Lord Shiva is the Destroyer, the very embodiment of death. You will always find Him among the dead, amidst spirits, corpses, and the ashes of burnt bodies. Manikarnika Ghat is Shiva's favorite haunt.

While I was doing this sadhana of Mahakala there eventually came a time when I began to hear someone laughing in my ear and telling me, "You fool! Do you realize what you are doing? If I come and stand in front of you, you will have to die; there is no escape. No one can see Me and live because no one can see Me except at the moment of death."

I laughed and said, "I don't care. I have to die someday, so why not now? I am ready to die, but I want to see You."

This went on for several days. Then the voice said "Listen, I'm serious. If you keep this up, it will mean your end." Again I explained, "I am ready to die; life means nothing to me. I am waiting for You."

Finally Mahakala became pleased with my sadhana and told me, "I know you want Me to come and stand before you but you will not be able to endure seeing Me and still continue to live. I will come and stand behind you, and I will always remain with you at your back."

Since that day I have never been afraid of death. How can I be, with the Destroyer Himself to back me up? I now know what death is and when it comes to me I will embrace it, because death is my own beloved deity Mahakala.

I started out talking about Shiva and then began to call Him Mahakala. Shiva and Mahakala are two aspects of the same being. Call Him Atman, Purusha, Universal Soul, Ultimate Reality, God the Father or what you will, Shiva is the One, the Absolute, the One without a Second, the embodiment of pure consciousness. All duality exists in the manifested universe, and Shiva is beyond all that.

Or rather, almost beyond all that. Shiva has a form, which means that His personality exists within Nature, created from Adya. Lord Shiva is not absolutely absolute because out of compassion He has

taken on an attribute or two to enable us to comprehend Him. These attributes, though, do give Him certain limitations; very subtle ones, of course. So subtle that from our point of view they are no limitations at all. But they are sufficient to distinguish Him from Mahakala.

Mahakala has no limitation of any kind whatsoever, at least in the universe we know. He has no form at all, none. At least Shiva manifests a form we can concentrate on. Mahakala is utterly formless, which means He can assume all forms at will. Mahakala is the God of Time. He is Satya Sri Akala: True, Auspicious, Beyond Time. He is Time: How can He be subject to it? Since time exists only for mortals, Mahakala must be immortal, which makes Him true because He is absolute, free of any taint of Maya. This makes Him auspicious, in the true sense of the word. Mahakala is the only being of all possible beings in the universe who never falls prey to Maya. Even Lord Shiva, the same essence as Mahakala in a different manifestation with a different job to do, fell once or twice. But Mahakala never even looks at Maya. No one can persuade Him to. When He comes for you, no matter how hard you beg for five minutes just to put your affairs in order, "No" is the only answer you will get. When even Lord Krishna Himself could not induce death to wait for even a moment how will you be able to do it? Why is this? Because Mahakala is the pivot on which the entire universe turns. On the one hand, there is the *Saguna Brahman*, the samsara, which is the infinity of forms, endless. On the other, the *Nirguna Brahman*, which is formless infinity, absolutely no form, zero as far as form is concerned. Between these two, connecting them together, is Mahakala. He is the fulcrum, the tangent between Infinity and Zero.

DEATH AND THE SMASHAN

If you know about birth you know about death, and vice versa. The best place to learn about death is the smashan. The smashan is the true temple, the place of Eternal Reality. When you go into an ordinary temple you go to ask for some benefit—and if you see a pretty girl or a handsome man there you will forget about the deity and start thinking about what it might be like to enjoy that attractive but very impermanent human body. In the smashan, though, all you know is sadness and tears. If a man sees a woman there he has to think, "Yes, she will die and be burned or buried like everyone else."

When you go to live in the smashan you first lose repugnance as you get used to living among corpses and bones and all sorts of other filthy things. After repugnance goes, fear goes, because when you know what a thing is you no longer fear it. You learn about death, and it can scare you no longer. After fear goes, shame goes, because you

are no longer afraid of anything, so you are unconcerned about doing whatever must be done, including walking about nude. You care for nothing then, and little by little all the Eight Snares disappear.

Most people go to the smashan for only a day. For the next week or so they will have no taste for the things of the world, but gradually that taste will return. This is what we call *smashan vairagya* —"smashan renunciation". That kind of renunciation is false, fleeting, easy to forget. Mahakala causes worldly people to forget death, but if you stay in the smashan long enough, Mahakala will cause you to forget the world permanently. You will forget your family, your friends, everything and everyone. All you will be able to remember is that you are going to die. This is true renunciation, which Lord Shiva alone can give you, no one else.

One day when I was sitting in the Banganga Smashan in Bombay I saw the state funeral for the then Governor of Bombay, Girija Shankar Bajpai. Soldiers were firing rifles, politicians were making speeches; it was a big show. Right next to the Governor's body was the body of a washerman burning quietly on its own pyre. I thought to myself, "No matter what your position in life, everyone ends up here sooner or later." Another time I saw an old Jain sadhu on one pyre and a young child on another. "Age makes no difference to Mahakala," I mused. "When your time is up you pass away." After so many experiences of death you forget all about life; your renunciation is complete.

The smashan is called Shahr-e-Khamosh, the City of Silence. No one goes there to sing or dance or laugh or enjoy themselves. No one goes there without being forced to do so, and all those who do go there cry for their loved ones who have left their bodies. Everyone cries—except the corpses. They laugh, because at last they have been set free from their earthly shackles.

Many people are terribly surprised to discover they have died. It's not unusual; suppose you had been at work doing what you like best, and you had a heart attack and died. Your mind would still be engaged in your work and would take some time to disentangle itself from its worldly attachments.

When death comes very suddenly like this, from a sudden heart attack or an accident or whatever, the deceased becomes very confused after death and must hover about as a spirit until he or she can figure out where to go. This is why I always say that even though there may be great physical agony it is better for the individual to be alert at the time of death or even to be asleep and dreaming, to permit the personality to project inward and search out the desires which will determine the next rebirth.

My mother was well aware of her impending death; my father had many weeks to prepare for his. But for most people even the act of

dying is full of terrifying uncertainty.

You may do your best to try to communicate with dying people, but it will not help much. They have already entered a different world. You will notice that a stage comes when the eyes begin to move rapidly and the lips to form unintelligible words. If you know about death you will know that the individual is seeing Chitragupta's account book. What a beautiful word: *Chitra*, which means "picture", plus *gupta*, which means "secret". Secret pictures, images no one else can see. And what is it? Only the unconscious memory, the causal body, the record of all the life's karmas. While you are in there in the unconscious seeing all the activities of your life flash before your eyes like a movie, as you review all your past mistakes, can you be at all conscious of the outside world? No. Your ego, which up until then has projected outward through your sense organs into the external world, self-identifying with the body, now projects inward into the unconscious, trying to find something to self-identify with, selecting the karmas for the next birth. So, the son or daughter may be wailing, "Oh, mother, mother, mother, please forgive me, I never knew," but it is too late because the mother is entirely unaware of what is being said. She has had to leave all connections with her physical body.

There is a way to force a person to be alert at the moment of death. You can actually force the ego back into the conscious mind and then communicate with the dying person for a few minutes. But it is very difficult to do.

It is always best to have gone through the process of dying while you are still alive. This happens, for example, when someone dies on the operating table and is then brought back to life. The scientists who are studying death nowadays have interviewed a bunch of these people, and they have identified some of the sensations which one experiences at death: the movement of the consciousness through a dark tunnel, the roaring noise, and what-have-you.

My foster daughter Roshni once experienced this. She used to drink *bhang* (a preparation of milk and cannabis) every day. One day I was in a queer mood, and I gave her the bhang personally. She drank it, sat down in the armchair, and closed her eyes. Within a few minutes her pulse and her breathing had both stopped. She came out of it after a bit, and I asked her what had happened."I was sitting in the armchair and flying through a long tunnel. It took a long time to get to the other end, and when I got there I started to go higher and higher. I was so scared I held onto the armchair very tightly. It was a very big space, an immense space, that we—the chair and I—were flying through, and I could see so many stars and other things that I can't express in words. I felt myself being attracted to a source of divinity, of love, and just then someone made me come back to my

body."

And ever since that day she has been different. In fact, she complains to me, "Why did you have to bring me back?" It was just like death, and now she knows what it will be like to die, just as those other people who have already experienced death know. And all of them will be much better prepared for death than the ordinary person, and their deaths will be much easier and better, because they know there is nothing to fear. Death is not to be feared; birth is to be feared.

Ante mati sa gatih: whatever you are thinking about at the moment of death determines your next rebirth. If, at the moment you die, you are aware and you remember God, you will definitely go to Him, there is no doubt about it. It is much more likely that you will remember God at the moment of your death if you have been remembering Him regularly all during your life. This is why you must lose yourself in love for your deity so that you'll die with His or Her name on your lips. So many of our holy books advise that in today's world the greatest worship is the simple remembering of God's name. The Sufis do it this way also. Remember what Kabir says: "When you come into the world you are crying, and the world is laughing. Live your life in such a way that when you go the whole world will cry, and you will laugh." And he did it too.

But do you think it is so easy to remember God at the moment of death? Oh no!

Once there was a guru sitting under a tree with his pet disciple. As he was relaxing the guru saw a mango growing on the tree, very near the ground, and thought to himself, "How much I would like that mango!" And just in the act of asking his disciple to pluck the mango for him, he died.

The disciple didn't know what to do. He was distraught: "Guruji is gone! Now who will look after me and teach me?" Suddenly he had a thought: If it is true that you go to whatever you were thinking of at the moment of death, and since his guruji had asked him for a mango just as he died, then he must still be somewhere around the area trying to get at the mango to fulfill that last desire.

So, the boy plucked the mango, and, not knowing precisely what he was looking for, inspected it carefully. He found an ant crawling on it, and from nowhere, seemingly, another thought came to him: "Why shouldn't guruji be in this insect?"

He took the ant between his thumb and forefinger and crushed it.

Immediately his mentor was standing in front of him. "Thank you, my beloved boy, for what you have done for me. I was indeed trapped in that ant, desirous of tasting a mango. You have saved me from many lives of groping about in Maya." And he blessed the boy and disappeared.

This does not mean that you should go around squashing ants. You had better know what you are doing before you play around like this. The boy in this story was just lucky—or perhaps you might say destined for it. How did he know that the ant was his teacher? In fact, how did he even get the idea to investigate where his mentor might have gone? It was all the play of his guru. His guru inserted these two thoughts into the boy's mind. This is the beautiful play of guru and disciple. The guru always knows what is going on but pretends to be ignorant; the disciple is expected only to be sincere.

But if you are not in a position to know about these things then don't fool about with them. In this case the guru himself was lucky. Suppose the boy had been a dullard, or ignored his intuition? The guru might easily have become entangled in Maya again, through even such a small desire.

Here is another story: There was an old woman who was truly pious. She worshiped God regularly, daily for several hours, and in fact didn't do much else. Toward the end of her life she became blind and had to grope from place to place, but this made her worship all the more perfectly since she lost most of the distractions of the outside world along with her sight.

She was purely a vegetarian and ate very little. One day as she was preparing her food she accidentally stepped on a baby mouse, which she was unable to see, of course. The mouse died with a squeal. She was softhearted and thought immediately, "What has happened? I have killed something!" And with this in her mind she suddenly died.

Well, *ante mati sa gatih*. That last thought at the time of death was for the mouse, so she had to be reborn as a mouse. Then, because of the eternal fight for food, greed and anger returned to her, and she was back on the downward spiral through the samsara.

So, even the slightest attachment can do you in. On the other hand, even the slightest attachment to God can save you. There was once a man named Ajamila who had performed plenty of bad karmas in his lifetime. As he lay dying he could remember nothing but the name of his son Narayana. Now, Narayana is the name of Vishnu, the Preserver of the Cosmos. And at the moment of death the name of Narayana was on Ajamila's lips. Two demons came to drag his soul down into hell so that he could atone for some of his karmas, but an angel stopped them and said, "How dare you try to carry this man away? Don't you know he died with the name 'Narayana' on his lips?"

The demons laughed and said, "Oh sure, he was calling his son. Is that devotion?"

"The fact is, he remembered Narayana, who exists in every human anyway. He is coming with me," said the angel, and Ajamila did get into heaven. He must of course have done plenty of penance in

previous births to get an opportunity like that, but this shows the power of God's name.

Very, very few people know the time of their death. Thanks to Mahakala, I can know everything about how my friends will die, when they are due to die, how death will occur, how many people will be present to witness it, under what conditions the death will occur. Since now I have a special relationship with Mahakala, sometimes He can be induced to show His magnanimity to them. Suppose someone's destiny mentions a lingering death after an accident. Mahakala can arrange to finish that person off immediately at the time of the accident; no suffering.

You cannot outwit Mahakala, but you may be able to prolong life. Mahakala always needs an excuse to take you, a concomitant cause. If you avoid the specific situation which is fated to cause your death you can go on and on—but very few can avoid it. Mahakala's effect on the mind is just too intense.

Just recently one of my friends decided to go to Talegaon, a town near Poona, on a holiday. I told him, "The next fortnight is extremely crucial for you; don't leave Bombay if you value your life." But he insisted upon going. When he got to the railway station the lines were blocked and no trains were moving. Instead of interpreting it as a bad omen and going home, he and his wife sat on the platform and waited several hours until they could get a train. They went to Talegaon, and a few days later he died there. You can't cheat death. No matter how long you evade it, death eventually becomes inevitable. Only one person is excepted: the yogi. If he knows enough he will know about his own death six months before it occurs, because the *prana* (life force) will start to leave his body then. Thereafter, if he likes, he can decide the best day and time to leave his body, and when he is ready he will call all his "children" together to receive his last blessings. After he says good-bye to each one, and the auspicious moment he has waited for has arrived, he sits in the Lotus Posture and goes into a trance. Suddenly there is a loud pop—*phat*!—and a jet of blood spurts up from his *shivarandhra* (posterior fontanelle of the skull). That is it; he is gone, free. But it is very uncommon to die aware like a yogi does. If people could only know what happens at death and after death they would not make so many mistakes. My Robby and I burned my father at Banganga, in the same place where I burned my mother and my son, Ranu, and where I will be burned one day. When my father's body was in flames, don't you think his spirit must have been hovering about it somewhere? Of course it would have. Suppose you came home from work one day to find that your landlord had thrown you out of your flat, and the building had been condemned by the city and then demolished. Wouldn't you hang around the area for a few

hours or a few days to reorient yourself? Every dead person hovers about the body, wondering what to do next. Why do you think the Hindus cremate their dead only a few hours after death? Because the spirit may have some hope of returning to the body as long as the body exists. When that body has been reduced to ashes, though, the spirit has to find its own path. Burial encourages the spirit to hover about for quite a long time, especially if the body is well preserved. Muslims hold a forty-day reading of the Koran to which the spirit is specifically invited, but this is not good because it makes the spirit linger. The sooner the spirit leaves and begins to find its own way, the better.

The poor dead person wants to let everyone know he is still alive and may become quite perturbed when no one around his body is listening to him, which is only reasonable, of course. You too would feel offended if all your relatives suddenly started to act as if you weren't there, when it is obvious to you that you are quite present. You can't blame the friends and relatives for failing to respond to the deceased's calls. Humans, except those few who possess very subtle perception, cannot see or hear the dead.

This is why I say that very few death rituals in any religion have any significance at all for the dead person. The priests invented most of the ceremonies as a means of making money from people's gullibility, which is bad enough except that almost none of the priests know anything at all about spirits, nor can they see and converse with them. The Vedic religion is not composed of useless rituals; those which are meaningless were added later by greedy priests.

After death the corpse is to be bathed, according to tradition. This is a good example of a meaningless ritual. Is there any use in bathing a corpse? Have you ever heard of anything more ridiculous? What is the use in cleaning it when in a few hours it will become ash, or worm or vulture food? Is the deceased worried about feeling clean when he no longer has a body?

You know, one day I had an interesting thought: We Indians are mostly vegetarian, and when we die we are eaten by vegetables; that is, we are consumed by wood, which is a plant material. We eat plants all during our lives and when we die the plants eat us in return. This is the Law of Karma. Muslims and Christians are predominantly meat eaters, and when they die they are buried and become meat for worms to eat. Parsis are also meat eaters, and when they die they are exposed on the Towers of Silence, and the vultures come and feast on them. I tell you, there is no escaping karma at all, except by grace.

What is even more amazing to me than the way people hold tightly to tradition is the changes which come over the deceased's loved ones. I will never cease to be in awe of Nature, of the power She has over

the human mind. Five minutes before he dies a man's wife hugs him, kisses him, and cries over him. Five minutes after he dies she is afraid to touch the dead body; that peculiar feeling is there. Of course she feels peculiar. Even when they used to enjoy sex and thought they were getting enjoyment from the body, they were really enjoying something else: each other. You never feel like cuddling or fondling a dead person because there is nothing within to cuddle or fondle; only the outer shell remains.

Shall I go further? After the husband dies his corpse is removed from the house, and even after his cremation the ashes are never brought home. Why? Because his spirit might come and trouble his wife. How absurd! Don't people have any common sense? They have been married for years, and they must have made love hundreds of times. If the spirit does come he will love her, he will try to help her out; isn't it logical? But when it comes to death, very few do what is logical.

When Roshni's father died I warned all his relatives not to waste money on any rituals. I told them frankly that there was no use and whatever could be done for him was up to me to do. His sister said to me, "You are a Hindu; what do you know about our Parsi religion? All the rituals will be performed, and the family will pay for it; that is our way."

I told her, "This has nothing to do with religion; this is a case of looting my poor children of part of the money their father left and that too for something which is useless. If it could do some good I would never object."

But she wouldn't listen to me. Eventually I lost my temper and said, "Go ahead and do it and face the consequences." They did, and within a few months this lady and all the relatives who had abetted her injured their left legs. She broke hers so badly it had to be put back together with screws and a metal plate. Only my foster daughter, Roshni, was spared; I've always been fond of her.

When one of my Guru Maharaj's disciples died I was told that he was going to be burned on a sandalwood funeral pyre which would cost about Rs 3,000.[1] Isn't it the stupidest thing? When the spirit has left the body, is burning it on sandalwood going to make any difference? When you finally leave your body you see so many new things, you experience so many unique things, that you have no time to bother about how your old body is being destroyed.

At the time of cremation, a *pinda* (ball of rice flour) is put out for crows to eat. The crow is a very smart bird. If a good observer is nearby he will notice that sometimes no crow will take the pinda. Now, crows are always hungry, and they would like to take it, but that spirit is hovering around the pinda and is refusing to allow any crow

to eat it. The spirit is very frustrated. He has been calling and calling but no one can hear him. This is the only way in which he can draw attention to himself.

When you notice that the crows are not eating the pinda, you must understand that the spirit has some *vasana* remaining, some earnest desire that was left unfulfilled during his life time. Then, if you care for the peace of the spirit you must go to the pinda and say, "If you have some unfulfilled desire, come to me in a dream or tell me in some other way," and the spirit will try to contact you.

This very thing happened to one of my "children" not too long ago. He did not talk to the pinda, but one of his recently deceased friends came to him in a peculiar sort of dream and asked him to help provide a better home for his now fatherless children. And he is going to do that now, to satisfy the spirit.

Both the Hindus and the Parsis offer food to their departed loved ones, who consume it ethereally by smelling rather than tasting it. The external form of the food doesn't change. I caution everyone I know never to eat food offered to a dead person. Such food has been polluted by the spirit's intense desire to return to physical life, which has a ruinous effect on the mind. You can even make a practical demonstration of this. Find a saint in samadhi and put some of this food into his mouth; he will directly come down from his samadhi, the pull of the physical is so strong. Priests are well known for eating such food, and this explains why their intellects are so materialistic even though they worship continuously.

The rituals of death in their simplest forms have been propounded because there is some value in doing them. But you need to know what you are doing. Do you have any idea why we Hindus always lay the corpse out on the ground with the head to the north? You know that the magnetic lines of force of the earth run north and south. There are three important benefits in this practice. First, rigor mortis sets in quickly and decomposition is hastened. Second, the magnetic field reacts with the body in such a way that the spirit cannot reenter the body even if it tries. Third, in this position it is easier to perform kilana on the spirit and do *Pitr Tarpana* immediately, which will help the spirit find its way to a new womb much faster and easier. After death the spirit is confused, uncertain of what to do. It is up to you as a loved one to do your utmost to give some direction to the after-death experiences to minimize the feelings of loneliness and terror of the unknown.

Pitr Tarpana is one of the after-death rituals which is really useful, if you perform it correctly. It is a process by which you invite your dead ancestors and attempt to satisfy their lingering desires which prevent them from making their way higher in the hierarchy of

existence. Did you know that this can actually alter your genes and chromosomes for the better? Suppose one of your ancestors was a debauchee, very fond of sex. When he dies his lust will not disappear, he will carry it along with him. He will long for sex, but since his body no longer exists he will have no way in which to satisfy his desire.

However, his genes and chromosomes still exist. They have been passed down to his children and grandchildren and so on. There is no real difference between seed and tree, is there? One is in an unmanifested form and one is fully manifested. So, this old geezer's lust will be felt by his descendants; so long as they have some of his genetic material in them they will vibrate at his wavelength, at least to some extent. You have millions of genes; not all of them work at once. How does the body decide which ones work? This is one way.

Now, if Pitr Tarpana is performed and this ancestor is made to take birth in a new womb—probably an animal womb since he is so overcome with the animalistic desire to copulate—he will have a nice new body with which to enjoy sex. He will self-identify with his new genes and chromosomes and will forget his old ones. Then you will be free of his influence on your own genes and chromosomes, because he won't be there broadcasting lust for you to resonate with. This will make your mind firmer, less focused on sex.

Your ancestor will bless you for giving him a means through which to fulfill his desires. Besides, you owe a debt to all your ancestors for having provided your physical body to you, and this is one way to pay off that debt and eliminate the karmic bond. Isn't this wonderful? Everyone is happy.

This is one of the many reasons I hate communism. Communists are taught to forget their parents, to denounce them if they work against the state. If you destroy your parents, who are your roots, how do you ever expect to prosper? On the contrary, you'll degenerate, become more primitive and barbaric. I hate communism!

Your ancestors are one of the reasons it is troublesome to be reborn. Every time you are reborn you have to cope with the idiosyncrasies and whims of all your dead forebears, and by the time you are finished overcoming all those limitations your life is over. That is why once you reach a certain stage in your sadhana you begin to crave for freedom from the obligation of being reborn. And let me tell you: salvation, *moksha*, freedom from rebirth, whatever you want to call it is Shiva's grace, nothing else. Lord Shiva tells His Shakti, "All these fools You have created to play with should be put to sleep; make them unaware of the truth and let them grope about. Only a few will I allow to reach for Me and come to Me, and then merge into Me when they are perfectly aware."

This is why everyone who goes to the cemetery cries; in fact the smashan is also known as *rudra bhumi*, the place where tears flow. Ordinary people cry because they are deluded by Maya and are self-identifying with the relative or friend who has just died. Saints and immortal beings cry tears of joy because it is in the smashan that they see their true personalities, their true selves; because what is Lord Shiva but pure consciousness? What state is Shiva in? *Samadhi nishto*: permanent samadhi, eternal oneness with the universe. Shiva's samadhi differs from ordinary states of samadhi because Shiva is aware of everything at all times. In ordinary samadhi you may lose your awareness of external reality: Shiva, though, is perfect awareness.

Shiva is almost never touched by Maya. He is the creator of Maya and allows Her to play about as She wishes. He can never die, because all other gods and celestial beings in the universe are subject to His jurisdiction; if He were to die how could He take them when their time came to cease to exist? The God of Death is the only being in the universe with the authority to take life; without that authority even He could not do it. An ordinary policeman can arrest a governor or a prime minister on the strength of his badge; without his badge he is powerless. Shiva has the right to kill.

Since Shiva cannot die, He was never born, because everything which was born must die. Death treats all beings alike. This is why Shiva is called *svayambhu* or self-existent, not subject to birth and death. You may have seen the icon of Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of Dance, where He is surrounded by the flames of dissolution as His dance creates, preserves, and destroys innumerable universes simultaneously according to the rhythm of His two-headed drum. Shiva is the source of that sound. He is pure rhythm.

You see, Shiva is absolute. Any form you worship is only a form, and you must worship the absolute behind it. For example, take the Shiva Linga, the most commonly worshiped image in India for thousands of years. What is it really? It is absolute firmness, stability. What is firmer than a rock? You may beat on it, shake it or do whatever you please to it but it will never budge.

The Shiva Linga is Shiva's penis, and the base in which it is mounted is His wife Parvati's vagina. There is a saying in Sanskrit: *bhagamukhe linga, agnimukhe parada*, which means "no matter how well you discipline the penis, or solidify mercury alchemically, the penis will always (eventually) ejaculate when placed into the vagina, and mercury will always (eventually) melt when put into fire." But this is not true of Shiva. He has completely burned lust from His consciousness. His penis forever resides in Parvati's vagina and yet He never loses control. This is why Tantric alchemists worship Shiva,

because mercury is Shiva's semen and only through His grace can they achieve the ability to solidify it so that it will not melt even when cast into fire.

Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas is said to be Shiva's abode. Why? Because it is intensely cold. Where there is no heat there is no mental turmoil. Heat is turmoil, which arises from desire. Lord Shiva has gone beyond all desire—but that is not so easy.

Life is only a memory. It may be a sweet memory or a bitter memory, but it is only a memory. So long as you remember that you are such-and-such a person with such-and-such an address and you have relatives and friends and whatnot, you can stay alive. When you forget—when your karmic debts have been paid and your warehouse of karmas is empty—you can no longer self-identify with anything. Without memory there is no life. In Sanskrit the word for memory and the word for the God of lust is the same: *smara*. Desire is the cause of karma; when desire is destroyed memory too will go, and you will be free. This is why Lord Shiva is called *Smarahara* (meaning both "Destroyer of Lust" and "Destroyer of Memory"). *Sma* in grammar means "past." Memory is only of the past. *Sma-rahara* is He who transforms you from present tense to past tense, He who kills you. *Sma-shan* is the place where you go from present to past, where you are transformed from individual existence into a memory.

What happens at death? During life the body is sustained by the ego, which self-identifies with the body, the relatives, the personality, and so on. Your ego is nothing but your Kundalini Shakti, your own personal fragment of Adya. All during life your ego tries to find Her mate, Her controller—Lord Shiva—and because we have forgotten the truth we find evidence of Shiva in other people, and convince ourselves that we have located what we have been searching for.

When Mahakala comes to a person He calls to the Shakti to come and unite with Him. This is why Mahakala has no form; He has every form. Every created being is only half and spends its entire life trying to reunite with its missing half, to return to the state of unity. Mahakala is like a master key which temporarily provides that perfect missing half, long enough for the individual to forget his or her previous existence and start on the road to a new existence.

When Mahakala comes to a person and the ego-shakti sees Him face to face She suddenly realizes, "Oh, no! I am not the body, I am not this limited personality, I am the Grand Consort of my Lord, the unlimited, eternal Personality!" Because of overwhelming love, the Shakti leaves the body to unite with Her Lord, and forgets who She had been self-identifying with. As soon as the ego forgets to self-identify with the body, the individual dies.

Some yogis and some higher beings exist in the *sadashiva* form:

Their individual ego-shaktis are merged together with Shiva at all times, but they are not fully united since, if they were, individual existence would have to be terminated. This is very rare, no doubt, but when it happens you can go beyond death.

Mahakala is a Rudra; He makes everyone cry. Do you know that He also cries, out of joy, whenever He takes anyone? He thinks, "By my magnanimity I have removed this individual from all the pains and miseries of existence, and the fellow was not even aware of my presence. Now he is truly at peace. People are fools to cry for their dead; they should cry for themselves."

Lord Shiva is Bholenath, the Lord of Compassion. He has not one atom of cruelty in His person. He is the kindest being there is because He relieves you of all your earthly agonies. Can anyone ever think of asking for more than that?

Everyone is afraid of dying, which explains why no one is willing to love Mahakala. Only two persons in all our scriptures have loved Mahakala and both of them became immortal: Markandeya and Nachiketas. Destruction is necessary, but, unfortunately, no one is willing to face death. Even for Rama and Krishna who were real incarnations of God there was one moment of shock, one tremor, when Mahakala appeared before Them. Some slight Maya was there, a momentary remembrance of Their children or whoever. So, you see, the sight of Mahakala is so terrible that even God incarnate quails before Him. Even Jesus had a moment on the cross when His faith almost failed Him.

Of course, the sight of Mahakala is not terrible; it is wonderful. But the ego sees Him as terrible because He has come to rip Her away from all Her attachments, and some attachments go very deep. When She is free, She realizes who She is and who Mahakala is. To remain alert at the moment of death is the achievement of a lifetime.

People think death is to be feared. It just isn't so. Birth is to be feared, because when you are born you forget all about what you did in your past lives and you go out and ruin yourself. But death is release from your physical shackles.

When Shiva comes to take someone He is very gentle, especially to innocent and harmless people. And children! How He hates to take children! He'll do almost anything for a child, just so it won't feel any fear; just so He can release it from its suffering. Why does He love children so much? Because of their innocence. They remind him of Gopala, Vishnu in the form of a baby. Shiva cannot do without Vishnu, nor Vishnu without Shiva; preservation and destruction go hand in hand.

ANJANEYA

Once upon a time Shiva and Parvati were atop Mount Kailasa in the High Himalaya, enjoying the night air, the stars, and the intense cold. Parvati decided that it was a propitious time to ask a question. "Lord," she whispered, "on whom do you meditate?" Lord Shiva smiled and said, "O Goddess, my mind is always turned to Vishnu, and even now I am thinking that He is going to be born into the world as Rama. I have decided to be born along with Him to help Him out." And that is why Anjaneya was born, and why He was the servant of Rama.

Anjaneya is called Hanuman. Some say this is because Indra, the king of the gods, once broke Anjaneya's jaw (*hanu*) with a thunderbolt, but there is a hidden meaning there. Hanuman should actually be read as Anuman because he is the atomic force (*anu* means atom), the force which moves all matter in the universe. This is why He is called Pavana Putra or Vayu Suta (Son of Wind, wind being personified as the motile force). And we all know the power of nuclear energy! That is the power of Anjaneya.

You can also read His name as Hanaman. *Hana* means to kill, and as Maharudra, the manifestation of the God of Death, Anjaneya is a killer. He is called the *Ekadasha Rudra* (the Eleventh Rudra) because He has perfect knowledge of both the dual and nondual aspects of Reality. Eleven is 11, 1 + 1 = 2, duality. Once Anjaneya said to Rama, "If I look at you from the point of view of jnana, there is absolutely no difference between me and you. But when I see you through the dual viewpoint, from the standpoint of a devotee, then I am your servant."

Anjaneya is extremely clever. At the time of *Setu Bandha* He was throwing stones into the water, and they would float; but when Rama tried to do it the stones would sink. When Rama asked why that was, Anjaneya replied, "Master, I throw stones in your name and they float, but you are God incarnate, and if you throw something down how can that thing ever stop until it reaches the bottom?" And Rama was amazed at his answer.

No one can match Anjaneya in *Vira Bhava* or in *Dasya Bhava*. He is the perfect hero and the perfect servant. That is why His devotees call Him Mahavira, the Great Hero. He could Himself have easily taken Sita and returned her to Rama without any war; after all, He burned down the entire city of Lanka. But no, the play had to go on.

It is always better for you to worship Anjaneya in His aspect as the perfect servant, because your qualities of service will develop and automatically your ego will be kept under control. If you try to worship Him in His heroic aspect you will have to endure great difficulties. It's worth it, though. I can't describe to you the feeling I experienced when I first saw Anjaneya. I was in a smashan late at

night, and as my ritual reached its climax a tremendous electrical storm began. The lightning came closer and closer, striking the ground near me, and it seemed as if the thunderbolts were going to fall right on top of my head. The noise of the thunderclaps—*meghanada*—was almost unbearable. Even the best of ascetics would run away; who would not try to avoid being struck by lightning? But, no! You have to sit. Thanks to His grace I was able to endure it, and I was able to see Him face to face. In fact, as the thunder worsened my mood became more exalted: "Ah! Now He is finally going to come to me!"Anjaneya is high, no doubt, but there is no manifestation of Shiva higher than Mahakala. He is the *Adirudra*, the First of the Rudras, the Ultimate.

SAGAL SHAH

When someone in India feels some overpowering emotion or has a fright he will touch his chest and say "Rama Rama Rama!" He will never say, "Hara Hara Hara," because Rama is a portion of Vishnu and so preserves life, and Hara, being Shiva, takes it away. Only a very few ever say "Hara" under such circumstances. Whenever I think of this I think of my own mother. As she lay dying she was repeating the name of her guru Haranath Thakur: "Hara, Hara, Hara, come to me." How many people have ever died with the name of the God of Death on their lips, even inadvertently as in my mother's case? That is why I always say I am most fortunate to have had her for my mother.

The word *hara* comes from the root *hr*, which means to snatch. Mahakala is He who snatches your life away. He has been called Lord of Thieves, because He robs you of your most precious possession: your life.

What is life, anyway? The worlds, the gods, the demons, everything has been created by the rishis; it is all their play. New creation can only appear when the old disappears, which is why the rishis never allow Death to cease to exist. Otherwise, their play would suffer. Death is essential for life. The rishis don't like to interfere directly—even if your child is a criminal do you destroy it? Never!—so Mahakala is there to do the dirty work of disposing of all the old forms.

The rishis are actually in charge, though; they pull the strings, and the universe dances. For example, they gave Lord Shiva the badge which allows Him to kill. Even Mahakala, who comes as close as any being can to existence without manifestation, exists at the whim of the rishis. And the rishis are beyond human comprehension, totally.

I have always advocated worship of God with form. But you should realize that when I say this I mean that you should worship the One who manifests through the deity. All deities, all forms of God are mere

aspects of the One, so instead of saying, for example, “Wah, Lord Shiva, how compassionate You are,” wouldn’t it be subtler to say, “Wah, Lord, Your creation Lord Shiva is the epitome of compassion.” All deities are merely playing their assigned roles in the great cosmic drama. You should respect them for how well they play their roles and love the One who manifests through them. It is so much easier to get to the One by worshiping God with form.

Mahakala is the absolute manifestation of Shiva but there are others who are almost as terrifying as Mahakala. I had to perform Shava Sadhana twice more before I was able to complete the sadhanas for all of Shiva’s manifestations. The last time I did Shava Sadhana was in the Sunderbans, the jungle islands which form the delta of the Ganga. I went there not out of curiosity but in response to a telepathic request. I ignored it for a few days until it proved too strong for me, and I had to make my way to the jungles.

The Sunderbans jungles are impenetrably thick. They are the home of the Royal Bengal tiger, “Mr. Stripe,” who can grow to a length of twelve feet. Tigers make a jungle exciting. While I was there I was well looked after by the Santhal tribe. They would bring me fruits to eat; occasionally I would even get a hunk of raw meat. I learned some useful things from them also. Primitive people are really wonderful in some ways. These Santhals act together as Bhairava and Bhairavi (a terrifying form of Shiva and His Grand Consort); can you believe it? And they have the utmost respect for their guru; they treat him as God himself.

Although I was enjoying myself I began to become restless after two or three days, and one night I decided to return to Bombay the next day; whoever had called me probably would not show up. That night while I was sitting at my *dhuni* (sadhu’s fire) he came: It was Purnananda, the same Purnananda who was the disciple of Sarvananda and later initiated Justice Woodroffe. It was at the insistence of Purnananda that I did Shava Sadhana again. By then I had done it a fourth time, after the three I had done for Shakti, and I was an old hand at it; it was just a formality to me. But it was essential for Batuka Bhairava. Batuka is a little boy only about eight years old in appearance, although he can be terrifying when he wants to be. The corpse was that of a handsome young man, and I succeeded without any ado. I am still thankful to Purnananda for enabling me to complete my sadhanas for all the manifestations of Mahakala.

Perhaps I was meant to do sadhana of Mahakala. I have always felt very lucky that I am a descendant of Sagal Shah, who was a merchant and a devotee of Lord Shiva. He had a little son who, you may believe it or not as you wish, was actually Mahakala in disguise.

Sagal Shah had taken a vow that he would not eat each day until

he had fed a sadhu. One day during the rainy season he had not eaten for three days, because he lived on an island and no sadhu would venture out there during a heavy storm. On the fourth day he learned that an aghori, who was really Lord Shiva in disguise, had come to visit the island. Sagal Shah accompanied the sadhu to his home. The aghori declared that he had not had food for three days and demanded something to eat.

"Of course, Maharaj," said Sagal Shah. "Will you have some sweetened milk or yogurt, or … ?"

"You fool of a merchant! I am an aghori. Am I meant for sweets? I eat meat. Bring me meat." Aghoris are always wild and uncontrollable.

Sagal Shah, remembering the old proverb *atithi devo bhava* (treat your guest as God), said to himself, "Lord, who have you brought into my house today?" because he had never even brought meat into his house before, much less cooked it there. But the guest must be satisfied. That was part of his vow.

The aghori continued: "And I don't want mutton or chicken. I want human flesh."

Sagal Shah, resigned to his fate, said "All right, Maharaj, I will have myself killed and cooked and served to you."

This only made the aghori wilder. "Dunce! You are an old man. Think how stringy and tough your meat will be. I want a young child. Take his brains and fry them for me."

Sagal Shah said, "I have a young son who is in school right now. I will go and bring him and have his brains cooked for you." His wife, who was pregnant, also realized that it had to be done, to fulfill the vow.

Sagal Shah went and found Chelayya, his son, and asked him to come home with him. Before he could explain why, Chelayya told him, "So that old fellow wants to fry my brains and eat them? All right, let us go there and I will see how he does it."

His father should have suspected something when Chelayya knew all about the aghori before being told. But Sagal Shah was too distraught over his son's impending death to notice. How could Chelayya know about it? He was something different; his own father had not realized who he was.

They went to Sagal Shah's house and Chelayya told the aghori, "So you're trying to be funny, eh? All right, do it! Go ahead!"

And he was slaughtered, and his brains pulverized, and the dish was prepared. The mortar and pestle in which his brains were mashed can still be seen.[2]

When the meat was set before the aghori he became wilder still

and refused to eat it, saying, “How can you expect me to eat food prepared by a barren woman? Shameless wretch!”

This was too much for Sagal Shah’s wife, who said to him, “You damned aghori! Who do you think you are? I am pregnant, so you dare not call me barren. Now I am going to make you eat and I am going to watch and see how you do it!” Ma in Her kinetic, Shakti form.

Suddenly the aghori said to the corpse of the boy, “Get up!” and immediately the boy was standing there alive saying, “So?” Then the aghori instantly bowed to Chelayya—the aghori bowed to Chelayya, mind you—and said to Sagal Shah, ‘’Request a boon!” Sagal Shah replied, “Lord, what can I ask for? In Kali Yuga no one is tested like this, and you have graced me by being born into my family, as my own son.

“Now all that I can ask is that all in my family and all of my descendants should have pure minds. Anyone who develops *durbuddhi*, perverted intellect, should be destroyed.”

And so it has been until today. For fifteen generations my family was fabulously wealthy, though no one did any work, and anyone who tried to act funny and become a criminal, like my father’s own brother, died. Our family was the agent for the East India Company and we used to own all of Bombay. Because we would not cheat at business we have lost much of what we once had. But that doesn’t matter one bit because we still have the real treasure: the blessing of God. Take the example of my father. Just before he died no one could tell the difference between him and his guru; he had concentrated on the form of his guru for so long that his own form had changed. He must have done billions of japas in his life, as did my mother. And this is just one effect of sincere japa and meditation. With such a background is it so amazing I turned out like this?

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[1] Nearly $14,000 in 2018 US dollars

[2] I’ve seen them myself, in Bilkha, Gujarat, near Mount Girnar, where they now reside after being moved from the island.

CHAPTER FOUR

RNANUBANDHANA

punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam,
punarapi matarudareshayanam

Birth and death and living in a womb,
over and over and over again.

THE PRIMAL DEBT

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF BEING BORN? To recognize yourself, to realize that you are neither the body nor the mind but rather the Eternal Soul which is the Ultimate Unity—call it Atman, Parampurusha, Brahman, or what you like.

How is one born into the world, though? What makes an individual take birth? Some say that karma is at the root of everything, but when asked about the origin of karma they say that karma is eternal.

But how is that possible? If karma was eternal how could anyone ever escape from it? The Law of Karma is actually nothing else but Newton's Third Law of Motion: each action causes an equal but opposite reaction. There is no fundamental difference between action and reaction since their relationship is such that whenever one occurs the other has to follow; this is simple cause and effect. This is why I always say, "Cause is Effect concealed, and Effect is Cause revealed." When you know one you know the other. If you know the potentiality inherent in the seed, you can predict what sort of tree it will produce. If you know the egg, you know the bird.

If there is no end to action and reaction how could anyone ever hope to get out of the whirlpool of life? How could you ever hope to realize yourself? There must be a way out, and there is. God is never cruel or unjust; humans are, and we project our limitations onto Him. To get out of the grip of karma you must first realize that all karma is due to *rna* (debt). Karma can occur between two individuals only if

there is some bondage of karmic debt between them. I call this *rnanubandhana* (from the Sanskrit *rna* "debt" and *anubandhana* "bondage"). For example, if I steal something from you in this lifetime the opportunity for me to steal from you can arise only if a debt exists between you and me; only if you owe me something. If there is no bondage, I will not be able to locate your home, or will not find what I want even if I do burgle it. And if I steal from you instead of receiving from you as a gift the thing I want, of your own free will, it is highly likely that you must have stolen from me in the past. Your past action creates a like attitude in me. This is a very much simplified example, of course, but you can get the idea from it.

My theft from you is not a karma: it becomes a karma only when I identify myself with the act of stealing. So long as I do not self-identify myself with the robbery it is not a karma for me. It may be unwise—it will hurt your feelings, it may land me in jail, you may beat me up or shoot me in return—but it is no karma; it is only a past rna working its way out. Self-identification with one's actions converts them into karmas by binding the ego down more tightly to the limited, temporary personality.

If I write a check for ten million rupees and fail to sign it, it is valueless, even though I performed the action of writing it and giving it to you. Once I sign it, though, and you present it to my bank to be honored, well, I'm in trouble unless I have at least ten million rupees in my account.

Remember, only the ego has the power to self-identify. Your ego is continuously self-identifying with your body and your personality: "I have black hair, I like race horses," whatever. Thanks to the ego we are all able to remain alive because we die as soon as the ego ceases to self-identify with the body.

The difficulty is that the ego not only self-identifies with the body, it also self-identifies with all the actions performed by the body. The ego tries to protect itself by preventing the repaying of karmic debts which have fallen due. Thus, new karmas are created.

Suppose I know I have a rnanubandhana with you. If I am wise I will ensure that the debt is paid off; it will mean one less bondage to the world and will bring me closer to my goal of self-realization. People enjoy being repaid but usually balk when it comes to paying out. The result is karma.

In my case I am very keen to finish off my cycle of births and deaths, so I allow every person who has any rnanubandhana with me to take from me whatever they are entitled to. Whether they are destined to make my life miserable, or to make me poor, or whatever, I don't mind. Let them do it; they cannot take from me any more than the value of the debt I owe them. The moment I object in any way,

even mentally, then karma has begun. Likewise, if I have to take from someone I take only what I know I am entitled to, no more and no less.

Now, I know I have the advantage of knowing about my rnanubandhanas. But anyone, even someone who has no idea at all about whom he owes and who owes him, can make good use of this attitude. The more you scheme and plot to snatch from others the farther you bind yourself down in karmas. The freer you are, accepting when it is given and giving when it is requested, the more of your rnanubandhanas are effaced and the closer you come to your goal.

This is why I always say that life is only a memory. It is the memory of all one's rnanubandhanas of countless births. This memory is stored in your causal body, from which the rnanubandhanas project for their fulfillment at the appropriate moment. If you have given a lot in your past births, then you will have many people to act as your debtors in this birth and you will have "sweet memories." If you have taken ruthlessly from everyone in the past they will take from you ruthlessly this time around and your life will be filled with "bitter memories." However you look at it, life is nothing but a memory, bitter or sweet.

And remember that the sweet memories can also get you into karmic trouble. Suppose someone owes me money and I demand it from him, or kill him for it, instead of permitting him to pay me in his own time, according to his own sweet will. Or suppose a woman owes me sex, and when the rna is over and she wants to leave me I try to force her to remain, or I rape her if she refuses to provide me with immediate gratification. Or suppose I am a doctor, and a loyal patient suddenly stops coming and I react with indignation or with insulting behavior. The moment you act to protect what you feel to be your self-interest, your ego, karma adheres to you like mud.

People ask me, "But how did all this start? How could there be a first rnanubandhana, a first debt to start the whole ball rolling?" The first rna, the source of rnanubandhana, occurs when Shakti has emanated from Shiva. After emanating, She feels She must return and reunite with Him. She owes Her existence to Him and because She feels incomplete without Him She craves reunion. The period between the emanation and the reunion is the time when karma is performed. When the union is complete there can be no karma; there is no individuality left to self-identify.

The job of Shakti is to irritate, prod, awaken Her Shiva. Once Shakti has emanated, Shiva becomes quiescent. Shakti incites Him to action so They can dance together and by Their dance create the play of existence. Shakti provides the energy for the sublime cosmic dance,

Shiva provides the control and rhythm. This is the meaning of the pictures in which you see Kali dancing on the prostrate body of Shiva: She is awakening Him out of samadhi so that He can dance with Her. My Tara does the same thing.

Look at the atom. The protons are like Shiva; they remain still at the center, attracting the electrons to themselves passively. The electrons, forms of Shakti, whirl incessantly about the nucleus trying desperately to reunite with the protons. Shakti is dynamic because it is She who emanates; She moves outward and then tries to move back, like the electrons. The neutrons represent what happens when Shiva and Shakti reunite. All dualities like polarity and charge are finished; the manifestation is dissolved. This is why the authorities say that the Absolute Reality has no gender or attributes. All the attributes are contained within it—otherwise how could they manifest?—but in the absolute state they are only in potential form. When a neutron splits to form a proton and an electron then the manifestation begins all over again: duality has been created out of unity. If a physicist is asked why this happens he can only answer that it is in the nature of matter to manifest and re-dissolve like this. And we Vedics say the same thing, that it is simply in the nature of the universe to manifest and re-dissolve periodically.

But why the atom? Consider human beings. Birth and death, death and birth: two sides of the same coin. You can't have one without the other. If you know birth you know death, and vice versa. Birth came first: Shakti emanated from the Unified, Unmanifested Reality. When Shakti returns to Her controller, Lord Shiva, that is death. Birth and death occur only so long as the causal body exists, because only when there are sufficient karmas with which the ego has self-identified will there be enough impetus for birth to take place to create situations in which the karmas can be worked out.

All the karmas in storage in the causal body must be burned away before one gains exemption from rebirth. But it is so rare for the causal body to burn that only a few over the course of centuries and millennia ever get to experience it. Besides, out of a million people perhaps only one even wants to experience it. Why? Because most of your karmas must first be burned away before you can even develop the desire to do away with desire. And, as long as even a few karmas remain, your body will remain, and your ego will continue to self-identify with your form and will continue to relate to the universe in terms of form.

The Ultimate Shiva has no form, no attributes, nothing. When you aim for the ultimate you can't expect to carry form along with you. Remember, all forms, even the form of Shiva, exist within the manifested universe, which is nothing but the Adya Shakti. When you

are ready to go beyond Shakti to Shiva you must be willing to turn from form and go beyond everything. Which is another reason I say over and over again: Worship God with form first and only then go for the Formless Absolute. Convert your own self into your deity so your ego self-identifies with the deity's form and not your own, and then your deity can carry you across to the Ultimate.

FATE AND RNANUBANDHANA

Unless you work very, very hard and attain immortality, you can be certain you are mortal. All created beings are mortal, because they are merely projections of energy, of Shakti. When Shiva and Shakti unite, millions of beings and universes are created by the overflowing of their bliss; this is on the cosmic scale. On the small scale a man and a woman copulate, and when the sperm and the ovum unite, they, two cells, proliferate into trillions of cells out of the exuberance of their joy. Men and women procreate; Shiva and Shakti create.

Whether it is creation or procreation, every projection is limited. The limitation is one of time. Even at the creation of the universe the projection of Shakti is limited; otherwise how could any forms be created? The idea of form is nothing but the idea of limit. Shakti is the force of limitation, which is why some so-called holy men fear and despise Her. But they don't realize how limited they are themselves.

The moment anything is created its life span is determined. Call it trajectory or atomic clock or anything you please, but the seeds of destruction are planted at the instant of creation and grow at a fixed rate. And that is why I always say that the moment of death is fixed at the moment of birth.

Some people say, "Oh, but you can always commit suicide and cheat death," but it's not true. If you decide to commit suicide it is because you are meant to commit suicide. As they say in Sanskrit, *purvadatteshu maranam*: you get the same death again and again, for at least seven births in succession. If you are meant to die by your own hand the idea of suicide will come to you just at the time that Mahakala is ready to come for you. You simply do not have any free will over selecting your time of death. Every death, in whatever circumstances, is decided at the time of birth; you may do your best to avoid it, but you will be unable to do so.

Even if you could know when you would die—and only a few yogis can know—there is no likelihood that you'd be able to alter the time or the circumstances because even if you try to make some changes Mahakala will make use of your rnanubandhanas to create the situation as He desires it. He will pervert your mind and the minds of those around you to force events to occur as He pleases.

Here's an example. Once there was a childless couple who prayed to Shiva for many years before being blessed with a son. When the father, who was the local king's astrologer, cast his son's horoscope, he was horrified to learn that the boy would die on his ninth birthday after paying his parents 100,000 rupees. This was the rnanubandhana between the boy and his parents, the reason why he had been born into that family.

The boy's father was mystified as well: Where could a nine-year-old boy come up with 100,000 rupees? He felt secure in the absurdity of the situation but just to make sure, he never let the boy out of the house, even to go to school, so he could never amass any money. Still, the boy learned something of astrology almost by default, because his father was an expert and people came regularly to consult with him. Off and on the man would warn his wife, "Never take anything from this boy!" and his wife would assure him she wouldn't.

When the boy became eight years old, the astrologer warned her again: "Make sure you never accept anything whatsoever from him!" His wife replied, "I told you once, I will never take anything." At age eight years and eleven months the astrologer delivered yet another warning to his wife and received the same assurance.

Three days left. The father thought, "When this period passes the dangerous conjunction will not recur for at least a hundred years. Nothing to worry about." One day left; again he cautioned his wife. But he didn't realize that he was living in a fool's paradise. Mahakala always possesses His victim six months before the appointed time of death and makes the individual perform the actions which cause death to occur in the prescribed manner. It was no different in this case.

The wife of that country's king had finally become pregnant after many years of barrenness. Just before the delivery was to occur the astrologer's son was strolling through the palace garden when he saw a gardener's wife collecting flowers. He asked her in childish innocence, ''Where are you going with all these flowers?"

She replied, "I am to take them to decorate the queen's bedchamber, where she is about to give birth to a child." The little boy said, "I am coming along with you." The lady told him, "Only women are allowed." The boy said, "Make me wear a sari so I can come too," and looked at her so mournfully that she had to agree. Mahakala had taken possession of him and was ordering her; otherwise the gardener's wife would never have dared to take him along, knowing the stiff penalty she would have to face if the deception were discovered. Some rnanubandhana had to exist between the boy and the gardener's wife, of course, to give Mahakala a field in which to operate.

Off they went to the palace like mother and daughter. There, just

at the moment of the child's birth the little boy got inspiration—from Mahakala—and took a twig and wrote on the wall in the blood-red juice of the *paan* (betel nut and betel leaf mixture) he was chewing: "This boy will surpass his father in every way and will live for 125 years." Then he and the gardener's wife left.

Ten minutes after the delivery all the royal astrologers came, led by the little boy's father, and when they cast the horoscope they all agreed: "If the father ever sees the face of this child the father must die."

Well, what to do? The king could not afford to allow that to happen, because the welfare of the kingdom was at stake, so he called two butchers and told them, "Take this child out and kill him." The queen grieved but consoled herself with the thought that her husband would continue to live, and she could have more children.

When the two butchers had taken the baby out into the forest they said to one another, "What has this child done that he should be murdered on the day he is born?" They could not do the deed, so they left the child under a tree. They killed a deer instead and took its eyes to the king to prove that they had done the job. How could two bloodthirsty butchers become so compassionate? It was the work of Mahakala, the god of death, and a complex rnanubandhana connecting the baby, the butchers, and the luckless animal.

By now the king was feeling remorseful—guilty of the murder of an infant and his own son at that—and he was wondering what to do. The remorse? Mahakala's doing. He went to the queen and told her, "I've done a terrible thing." She said, "You? What have you lost? I've lost my baby!" Suddenly the king saw the horoscope written on the wall. When he read the words, he was so astonished that he called all his guards and ordered them to find out who had written it. They interrogated everyone who had been there and when they reached the gardener's wife, she admitted that the chief astrologer's young son had come in disguise and done so.

Meanwhile the boy had gone happily to his home and had had his nice food and was resting, as if he knew what was going to happen next. Suddenly officers arrived and escorted him to the palace. The king confronted him with the writing on the wall, and the boy boldly told him, "What I have written cannot be wrong. The baby cannot be dead." A nine-year-old boy could never be so confident; Mahakala was speaking.

At this, the king called in the two butchers, who confessed after a good hiding that they had not killed the infant. The king and his whole court rushed to the tree and found the baby alive, honey from an overhead honeycomb dripping into his mouth to satisfy his hunger. The astrologer's son told the king, "You have seen your son's face, and

yet you live." The king was wonderstruck and asked, "How could you be right when all my astrologers were wrong?" The boy told him, "I was present at the precise moment of birth; my father and all the rest were ten minutes late." The king was so pleased that he wrote on a slip of paper, "Pay the bearer of this note 100,000 rupees from the royal treasury."

The boy ran home as fast as he could, calling for his mother: "Ma, Ma, Ma!" When he got to his house his mother met him at the door. He jumped into her arms, thrust the note into her hand, and died.

His father came home a few minutes later, having heard the whole story at court, and found his wife cradling their son's dead body. He shouted, "You stupid wife! I told you never to take any money from him!" But she said, "How could I have known that the scrap of paper in his hand was a receipt?" And then, of course, there was nothing to do about it.

So, there is no way to escape death unless you go beyond it. Please remember, the time of death is fixed for everyone. Even if you want to die earlier or later you will not be able to. I remember a newspaper report: As soon as some young bride left her new home to visit her mother, her husband became so depressed that he decided to commit suicide. First he swallowed all the poison in the house. Then he sealed all the doors and windows and turned on the gas. Since he didn't like the smell of gas, he went and bought some cigarettes and returned to the kitchen where he lit one, and bang! He was so frightened by the noise and fire that he vomited out all the poison and ran for his life. He was miraculously unscathed by the explosion, and his wife had to bail him out of jail for trying to burn down the house.

And then there was another true story not too long ago. Some primary school teacher had been so fed up with his life for the past ten years that he kept wanting to die but had never been able to do so. Then one day he was found dead in a Shiva temple, embracing the Shiva Linga. He had searched for Mahakala for so long and had finally found Him. Why didn't he succeed for ten years? Because it was not yet time for him to die. No other explanation is possible. I have spent many long years of my life in the smashan and I think I have found out a little something about death.

You know, it is really a blessing that we do not have full knowledge of fate and rnanubandhana, the workings of birth and death. If we did, a mother who knew that a certain son would take more from her than he would give would never love him; she would neglect him and might even try to kill him. We would be prejudiced against other people from the start and that would only increase our self-identification with our bodies, which exist solely because of rnanubandhana. And all this would only add to our already heavy

load of karmas. That is why one does not get remembrance of past lives until a later stage.

I have experienced all this myself, you know, which is why I can talk about it. I lost my first son, Ranu, in spite of every precaution; and I did not understand what was going on until much later, when my Guru Maharaj literally beat it into my head.

Ranu was meant to die young, that is all there was to it. I had plenty of warnings, I had my own suspicions, I did all I could, but there was no way to avoid Mahakala.

Jina Chandra Suri, the Jain ascetic who forced me to do Shava Sadhana the first time, was also involved in this drama. See how strange are the workings of rnanubandhana? My wife had had several miscarriages, and I was wondering if she would ever be able to have a child. Once when she was at her parents' home in Gwalior, Jina Chandra Suri came to me and said, "There is an ethereal being who has been coming to me daily and bothering me: 'I want to come to the world of mortals and play. Let me come. Let me come.' I have decided that he should be born into your family." Right in front of me the old man wrote out the horoscope and described exactly how the boy would look. He told me, "Your wife will conceive on such-and-such a day." I thought it was all a big joke, and told him so: "Look, Maharaj, my wife is in Gwalior; how can she conceive there?" He didn't bother to reply but just left. I knew that even in his miserable condition he still had a few tricks up his sleeves, so I sent a telegram to my wife telling her there was no need for her to return to Bombay; she should continue her vacation with her family indefinitely.

But it's not so easy to prevent the unfolding of your destiny. Someone in Gwalior told my wife, "Your husband has just been operated on for his tonsils and he is hiding it from you." She took fright and caught the next train for Bombay. When I met her at the station I realized that it would all take place as Jina Chandra Suri had predicted. My wife conceived on the specified day, the pregnancy was uneventful, and the boy was born at the exact time required by the horoscope the old man had written out. What's more, the baby fit the physical description perfectly.

And so I have Jina Chandra Suri to thank both for introducing me to my Mother Tara, and for giving me a unique son. You know, Jina Chandra Suri's fate was somehow connected with that of Ranu. Three months before Ranu's death the old man came to me and said, "Your child is going to make you cry; he'll make you miserable." And three months after my son was cremated, the old man passed away himself. One day he was delivering a lecture on the Jain religion in one of their temples, and in the middle of the discourse he just keeled over dead.

What a boy Ranu was! My God, if he had lived he would have been the best! Sports, studies, you name it, he was tops in all of them. Not only that, he had innate spiritual powers. Sometimes when people would come to me to get some work done Ranu would meet them first and say, “Give me some chocolate and I’ll see that your work gets done.” And it would be done! No one ever understood how, and even I only found out how after he was gone.

Everyone who met him loved him. He was my father’s favorite. And my mother! Here in India it is a tradition that when you take initiation from a guru you give up one food for the rest of your life; you dedicate that food to your guru. My mother refused to eat mangoes after Ranu’s death, because mangoes had been his favorite food—even though obviously he was not her guru. And even my gurus loved him! One day when Ranu was being too mischievous I raised my hand as if to slap him. I would not have done it; I never hit my children. I just wanted to scare him. But my Junior Guru Maharaj was in the room. He caught my hand and with real pain in his voice he said, “Haven’t you ever looked in his palm and seen how short his life line is? Promise me you will never strike him.” And, of course, I did promise it. Actually, I had known from Ranu’s horoscope that his life would be in danger early on, and as soon as my second son was born and I looked at his horoscope I saw that it predicted he would be the eldest child in the family. This certainly suggested that Ranu had to die.

So, I decided to give him the happiest childhood I could. When he was wild and naughty I would tell him, just to punish him a little bit, “If you don’t behave, your Papa will go to where Gopala lives,” meaning that I would die. But Ranu would always tell me, “No, Papa, I will be going before you do.” He knew, he knew!

Well, Ranu died at age nine. As the time approached my Senior Guru Maharaj decided to visit Bombay. Now I know that he came to say good-bye to Ranu; back then I was still hopeful that something could be done.

One day a couple of friends and I were sitting with my Senior Guru Maharaj and one friend said to me in English, “Why don’t we try to get your Guru Maharaj to go to the cinema?” This fellow knew that my Senior Guru Maharaj would never patronize anything like that because he hates the British, which mean to him Westerners in general. He used to say, “What have the Westerners ever done for us except to teach us to piss standing up like donkeys?”

Anyway, my friend was still talking: “Let’s take him to a really hot picture.” My old man was just looking at him with his piercing stare—his eyes never blink—and then suddenly he said in Hindi, “Why don’t we go to see a picture today? I’d like to see that new picture with Rita

Hayworth in it."

I got the shock of my lifetime. I couldn't understand it. Why should he want to go see something he hates? And how could he possibly know or care who Rita Hayworth was? But we went. And during the picture my Senior Guru Maharaj didn't even look at the screen. He sat with his head on his chest, covered by his arms, with his elbows together at the waist. Very strange. I didn't know what to make of any of this.

If you ever get the opportunity, see that picture. It was called *Down to Earth*. Danny is a piano player whose dancer quits him. He is in bad shape so his mother, who has died, gets permission to come down from heaven to help him. She becomes his dancer—of course he does not know who she really is—and then he rockets to fame. They are doing very well together when the first dancer Danny had employed comes back and asks to be rehired. Although his mother tells him, "But Danny, I only want to help you," he sends her away and rehires the first dancer—and straightaway plummets. Then he realizes his mistake and asks his mother to come back. She does, and up he goes again.

His mother is finally called back up above. There is a limit to everything, after all. She begs, she pleads, "No, I can't go, I have to look after my son," but then we see a big gandharva or some kind of angel smiling at her, and he moves his hand and she leaves the earth and is drawn back up above.

As she is about to go she sees her son and cries, "Danny! Danny! Don't you hear me? Can't you hear me? I want to help you. Listen to me!" But Danny is drinking at a cocktail party in some producer's house and he can't hear her because she has become ethereal.

Up in heaven she is very unhappy—"My Danny, what will become of him?"—and someone comes along to talk with her about it. She is completely despondent, and he just strokes the back of her head and suddenly she says, "Oh, it was all a dream, wasn't it?" And she becomes happy again. But still for some time the memory is there, like the morning recollection of a dream.

After the picture was over my Senior Guru Maharaj asked us, "Did you understand?" I said, "No," because I couldn't understand. My old man left Bombay and sometime later Ranu died. About two months thereafter he returned to Bombay and asked me again, "Now, did you understand that film?" I still can't tell you how he knew that film was worth seeing to remind me of the story of Ranu's life.

Look how Mahakala works. I had gone out of Bombay to Mathruli near Surat in the Konkan for a short while with a certain sadhu—my wife's own guru, in fact; he was named Shankargiriji and lived to be about 125, though he was not quite 100 at this time and still looked

like a sixteen-year-old boy—and I told my wife in no uncertain terms not to have Ranu operated on for his tonsils while I was away. But she ignored my advice and did it anyway. I had a peculiar feeling that something terrible was going to happen. Then when I learned of the operation I told her specifically that if she let him go to school while I was gone that it would be the end of him. Well, she didn't listen to me. She—or rather Mahakala—sent him to school and he developed polio. He was sick only four days.

While I was sitting out in the jungle I started seeing something funny. I saw that Ranu was dying. I told Shankargiriji that I had to go back to Bombay, but he said, "Don't be stupid, it's all your imagination; don't go back." I waited there for some more time and then I saw the same thing again. This time I forced Shankargiriji to come back with me to Bombay. By the time I got back it was almost too late. I quickly put Aghori Baba's stick under the mattress and laid my boy on the bed on top of it.

I then thought that everything would be all right, because if Aghori Baba's stick had stayed underneath him Ranu could never have died. That is the power of the stick. Aghori Baba gave it to me long ago, and I have used its miraculous powers on so many people. My foster daughter used it on me when I had my heart attack. I used to ask her, "Why is my bed so lumpy?"

But look how Mahakala works! Dinkar, my friend who was with me there, told me to go down and get some coconut water for Ranu. While I was gone Ranu—remember, it was Mahakala speaking through Ranu—asked Dinkar to put him on the other bed. Dinkar never knew about Aghori Baba's stick, and didn't move it along with Ranu. When I came back my boy was gasping. I lifted him in my arms, he said "Gopala," and he was gone.

He knew he would die. He even told the principal of his school, "Now it is time for me to leave. I won't be meeting you again. I'm going to a place where it is very cold," meaning he would be reborn in America. And even my intellect had become perverted. At one point I had prayed, "Let my boy die rather than become a cripple," because he had been so good at sports like badminton that his spirit would have been crushed if he had been forced to limp around for the rest of his life; that is what polio does to you, you know.

In any case, after my Ranu died I went mad. My position was pitiable. I actually had to borrow money to burn him. For six months I sat in the smashan with one small bone and some ash which I had retrieved from his funeral pyre. I was trying to revive him in the same body. Eventually someone promised me that he would come back to me after being born to different parents, carrying certain signs on his body so that I could recognize him.

I refused to meet my Junior Guru Maharaj for four years after my son's death. When I finally did go to visit him, I gave him such a barrage of curses that he had no option but to sit and listen to me for two hours. I used all the foul language I know; in addition, I was telling him things like, "You are a sadhu, so you never had any children; what can you know of the grief of a father who loses his son?"

He listened to me patiently until I was through and then said quietly, "Wah, Babuji, wah; now I know how strong the love of human beings is. If you really loved your son so much, how is it that you are still alive after his death? Why didn't you die of shock at the moment of his death or throw yourself on the funeral pyre with him? You are eating and drinking as if nothing had happened. You are going to the races and enjoying your life. From this I understand that this was not real love but only rnanubandhana, just a debt which had to be paid."

I was ashamed, because I knew that what he said was the truth. Then he told me, "Come here," and he pressed a certain nerve on the back of my head, and suddenly I understood the rnanubandhana between me and my son, and why he had to die. Guru Maharaj told me, "There is no need for you to cry. You know God exists in everyone's heart. If you see your Ranu in everyone you meet, you will have so many Ranus."

So, I lost one son but gained millions. Wasn't it worth it? And later I realized that by continuing to live I had been able to do some things for Ranu which benefited him immensely. I saw to it that he underwent thousands of births during the four years between his death and his reincarnation in human form. Thousands of births, in which millions of karmas were wiped out. And in so many of those births he was sacrificed. It is not necessary for the spirit to enter the womb and actually grow with the fetus. It is sufficient if the spirit enters the animal just a few minutes or hours or days before the sacrifice occurs. And the nice thing about it is that once you are sacrificed in one womb you never have to take rebirth in that womb again, never.

I can predict one characteristic of my son's personality in his new body, wherever he may be: he will never want to injure any animals. And there will be some species of animal of which he will be so fond that he will never be able to endure it if he sees them in pain—all because he has been sacrificed in those forms.

When you see a dead animal on the road and a shiver suddenly and involuntarily goes up your spine, somewhere in some previous birth you must have endured something like that. Perhaps it was not a car; you might have been crushed by anything, even an elephant or a boulder. But unconsciously the agony is still present. You "remember"

the past experience and shiver uncontrollably.

And once you develop yourself spiritually you feel not only your own pain, but you empathize with the pain of the being who is suffering. When you see God in every human, every animal, even the tiniest insect, and even in the vegetables you eat every day, you cannot bear to see their torment, because it becomes your torment. You see God suffering, and it is unbearable.

Whenever I drive past a certain mutton shop near Poona I see rows of goat carcasses, and I feel pity for the goats who were slaughtered merely to please someone's tongue. One day I got so wild that I said to myself, "I'll see to it that everyone in this city is burned alive!" just to make up for the sufferings of the little kid goats who are tethered near the carcasses. Animals can smell imminent slaughter, and they fear death like any other living being. How cruel it is to force baby goats to spend twenty-four hours with the dead bodies of their own kind, knowing all the while that in the morning they too will end up on the meat hooks!

I was so wild that day that I was ready to invoke any spirit just to finish off everyone in the town and teach them a good lesson in sensitivity. Suddenly some ethereal being sneered at me, "You fool! Who are you to pity them? At least they know when they are going to die; their suffering is limited to a day. But you have no idea when you are going to die, or how much you will have to suffer. Who deserves pity: they or you?" And then I had to keep quiet, because every word was true.

Let me assure you, though, that it is better not to know when you are going to die unless you are an advanced yogi—and sometimes not even then. If I had not known Ranu was going to die, I would still have felt the hurt at his death, no doubt, but how much more did I feel it when I knew it all beforehand and could do absolutely nothing about it? It is a real blessing from Nature that when we are born we forget our rnanubandhanas; otherwise most people would not be able to endure the misery of existence. Only those who need to know are finally permitted to know, so that they can go beyond rnanubandhana. And for those few who do know there is nothing more relieving than the grip of Mahakala, the grip which signals that soon they will be free of the responsibility of remaining alive, swimming in the shark-filled ocean of the material world.

My own father did not know when he was going to die—but I knew, and I was ready for it. During the summer of 1978 I predicted to my Robby that my father would die in his sleep before the end of the year. On the night of December 30 Robby said to me, "You assured me your papa would pass on during this year. What happened? He is still alive."

I replied, “There is still one day left in the year, isn’t there? Let that one day go by first and then tell me anything you like.” Suddenly, for no apparent reason, a dog began to howl piteously in the street below. We later discovered that he had been locked in the post office located in our building on the ground floor and was howling to try to attract attention to his plight. According to the science of omens, however, the mournful baying of a dog in the night is an exceedingly inauspicious sign.

The next morning the phone rang at 5 a.m. to announce that my father had died in his sleep during the night, about the same time the dog had begun to wail. As I hung up the phone I turned to Robby and said, “Now what do you have to say?”

A few hours later we went to pay our last respects to the old man, and as we entered his room I whispered to Robby, “Look at that face!” Then I pointed to a portrait on the wall whose features looked almost the same as those of the old man, and said, “That fellow on the wall is Haranath Thakur, our family guru. My father concentrated on his picture for so many years that he became like his guru even in physical form. This is a practical demonstration of the *Kita Bhramari Nyaya*, the Law of Caterpillar and Butterfly: Whatever you concentrate on you will eventually become.”

Actually, there is an even better reason for this transformation. In 1927 my father came down with meningitis and died. Yes, he died; I can show you death certificates signed by three different doctors. We received a message from Haranath immediately: “Don’t remove the body for twelve hours after death.” All our relatives said, “Don’t be stupid. He’s dead now, let’s cremate him.” But my mother had implicit faith in her guru and she was adamant. After six hours the corpse sat up. He lived for another fifty-one years.

A few days later my father received a letter from Haranath: “My son, you will have a long life, but you will never see your Haranath any more. Look after my boy,” meaning me; I was eleven at the time. A cover letter from Haranath’s son was enclosed which stated that on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a time his father had gone to sleep in his garden after mentioning that he felt my father needed his help. Haranath never woke from that sleep. The time he went to sleep turned out to be exactly the moment my father revived.

After this experience my father was a changed man. Although he had not had much interest in his business before, after this incident he lost all interest in business and would spend his time doing japa or discussing spiritual subjects with my mother. I think there must have been some connection between his revival and his guru’s death.

That connection transformed him, purified him. How can I say that? Because there were no flies around his dead body, not even one,

and the body itself was almost as light as that of a child. Living a disciplined life benefits you even after you die.

Robby and I took the body to the Banganga smashan, where I insisted on arranging the pyre myself. I always arrange the pyres for my family's funerals. It's my job; the smashan is my home. I think I should know best how it is to be done. After igniting the pyre, I called my Robby over and he and I made offerings of ghee (clarified butter) into it as if we were worshiping a sacrificial fire according to the traditional ritual. No one dared stop us, though there was visible agitation in the audience at the scandal of a son openly performing ritual worship on his own father's funeral pyre.

Later, as we sat quietly smoking and watching the pyre burn, Robby mentioned this to me. I had hearty laugh over that and told him, "What does my family know about me? I have never shirked from doing anything I felt I needed to do. I don't know why it is, but I will do most anything just for the experience of it. I'll do it once or twice just, so I know I can do it well and then quit so it doesn't become a habit. Aghora is my life, though. I have always lived in the smashan, and as an aghori I cannot afford to distinguish between the funeral pyre of my mother or my father and that of anyone else. How can I? No—sadhana means sadhana, however you look at it. You must be ready to forget everything to become an aghori.

"I had the same idea at my mother's funeral. In fact, I asked my friends, 'Shall I perform a little sadhana here? It will give us great material benefits.' But they turned me down."

We sat there for a couple of hours, enjoying the hiss of the flames, the cawing of the crows, and the rumble of the sea just beyond the retaining wall. Finally, we went to inspect the pyre, finding only a few bone slivers remaining among the piles of ash. After collecting some of these splinters for later rituals we walked back to the car for the drive home, and I told Robby, "Tonight we'll celebrate New Year's Eve with champagne! I feel I really have some reason to celebrate. My father has succeeded at his sadhana and had a fine death. As we head into the new year, he has got a good head start into a new life, a life those of us who live in the smashan know very, very well."

CHAPTER FIVE

GIRNAR

Human beings are nothing but sheep. I used to be in the fl ock of sheep, but I ran away, so it's no surprise that everyone else, all the so-called normal people, thinks I'm insane or, at the least, abnormal. And I think the same about them. Only one of us can be right.

GIRNAR

WHILE I WAS IN BENARES, where I had been doing sadhana of Mahakala on Manikarnika Ghat, I had heard that Dattatreya (an immortal ascetic) was still living in Girnar (a mountain in the Saurashtra peninsula of Gujarat), and that, if you tried hard enough and were destined for it, you could meet him.[1] I had to go and find out if it could be true.

I went to Junagadh by train, and when I arrived at the foot of the mountain I decided to stay at the Nawab's guest house. At that time the Nawab of Junagadh had jurisdiction over Girnar. I would go out on the mountain during the day and return for my food and rest to the guest house. That is the sort of luxury I was used to; after all, I am a billionaire's son.

Then I decided that I should move out onto the mountain itself since I had not come to Girnar for a holiday but to do sadhana. I located an old deserted Shiva temple and moved in there. It was situated in such a way that by sitting in front of it no animal could surprise me from behind. In front of me I would build my dhuni, so I was protected all round, because animals won't come near a fire.

I started eating only what the sadhus ate at the *sadavarats*. These are places established by rich merchants to feed whoever comes by, as a sort of service. I took off all my clothes and walked around without a stitch. I covered myself with my hands at first, but after a while I lost all my shame.

When you are wandering as a sadhu you run into all types of

people. Many criminals masquerade as sadhus or fakirs in order to escape the police, and the police, in order to catch such criminals, masquerade in the same way. Then there are men who run away from nagging wives or heavy debts or some other responsibility. There are magicians, and men who cheat barren couples with promises of children, and the whole flotsam and jetsam of society. When you become a sadhu, you must be able to know who is genuine and who is not. And the best way to do that is with a chillum of *charas* (a type of Cannabis resin) or *ganja* (marijuana buds), because most sadhus are forbidden to drink.

Be sure to let that fellow light the chillum and take the first puff. You will be benefited in so many ways. First, he will get the fire going for you so that you don't have to inhale too hard. Second, by his technique of holding the chillum and inhaling you will know whether he is an old crony or a beginner, or just what. And as soon as he starts to get into his intoxication everything will come out: who he is, why he is moving about as a sadhu, where he is going.

I'll give you an example. Once I was out on Girnar when I happened to meet a strange sadhu. As usual we sat down to smoke, and before long I began to collect information from him. When he told me that he was from Rajasthan I immediately suspected something, because people from that state are well known as misers instead of sadhus.

I shifted the conversation slightly and came up with the information that he hated to beg. Another clue: Would someone who had plenty of money and position in society ever stoop to beg? So, he must have been a prosperous merchant, since people from Rajasthan are good at business.

My last bit of data was obtained when he told me, "This ganja has made me hungry; let's go down and get something to eat." I was convinced: here was a businessman who had left his family, perhaps because he lost his money, though that was not certain. I decided to rid Girnar of yet another false sadhu and told him, "Swamiji, I am so pleased to have met you. I want to give you something in return. Take this number and bet on it."

He did, and he won a packet. He left Girnar and returned to his family and business. Would a real sadhu ever think of gambling? Never!

Eventually I quit eating with the other sadhus and started eating nothing but fruit from trees in the jungle. Before long I realized that I was harming the trees by plucking their fruit, so I ate only what fell. Then I ate the leaves from the wood I would cut for my dhuni; then only fallen leaves, then only water, and finally I was living on nothing but air until afterward an ethereal being told me to start eating again.

I've always believed that when you do a thing you should forget everything else and do that one thing with heart and soul. When I was interested in mundane pursuits I was a perfect materialist. You would never in your life have imagined that I could be interested in spiritual subjects. And when I was doing sadhana, I forgot everything else and I did it. For example, for ten months in Girnar I lived in an *arka* (*Calotropis gigantea*) tree in an old smashan, eating only arka leaves, doing a ritual to please Anjaneya. Arka leaves cause violent purging and vomiting. Do you know how 'hot' arka is? *Arka* means "sun" and after two or three days of eating those leaves my mouth and tongue had swollen to twice their normal size. But that didn't stop me; I continued with the ritual. Aghoris always overdo a thing.

To become an aghori you must first renounce the world completely, and that is not easy, mind you. Becoming a sadhu in the real way is no joke. Before you can become a sadhu, you must do rituals for yourself just as if you had died. You have died—to the world. Then you offer your body, your senses, and your mind into the fire. Only then are you eligible to put on the ochre robes of renunciation which a sadhu wears.

After that your teacher will initiate you into the sadhu's mantra: *Om Namo Narayanaya*. Whenever you see any creature, even the smallest ant, you must remember that Vishnu in the form of Narayana lives in that creature, and you must mentally bow to Him. And when you sit for meditation you must forget the world around you and remember only your deity.

When I was a naked sadhu, or *Naga*, sometimes my ego would be hurt. I had been a wrestler, so I was heavy, and people would say, "Why isn't this fellow working somewhere instead of begging?" or they would say, "He looks like this," or "His cock is like this," but I couldn't say anything. I could only repeat to myself, "Narayana." It hurt, but it worked; I learned to endure all the taunts.

The main reason for becoming a Naga is to remove once and for all every thought for the body. When you are naked you can't hide anything, and before long you don't bother to try. However, most people harbor some shameful thoughts within and would not dare to disrobe before anyone else. Why else would sadhus wear ochre robes? Once one of my "children" who has done a lot of sadhana during his life was sitting with me in Bombay and suddenly I took off my clothes and told him, "You do the same thing; we must sit naked." He didn't say a word but took off all his clothes. It was a good test, and he passed it with flying colors. Of course, he still found it a little awkward mentally, but that is to be expected in the beginning.

I used to play around like that a lot. Sometimes I would wear a *lungi* (a sarong-like garment) to go out for a drive with one of my

friends. When I got fed up with the lungi I would shout at my friend, "I can't take this restriction any longer," and I would rip it from my body and drive naked. The fellow would try to pacify me: "What are you doing? Think of your prestige." I'd tell him, "What prestige? Does an aghori have any prestige?" Eventually he would calm me down and I'd put it on again. I am not as wild now as I was then, but I still hate to wear clothes.

And don't forget, if Nagas are shameless, *Nagis*, their female counterparts, are equally shameless or even more so. They love to play about together. Nagas and Nagis know a few mantras and can achieve some minor siddhis. And, as you know, whenever anyone becomes powerful there is always a tendency to let the power go to the head. Then they go around trying to show off.

Suppose a group of Nagas and Nagis are sitting in the smashan. One Naga may become intoxicated with his power and elongate his penis. A good Naga can elongate his penis fifteen feet or more; it is a simple siddhi. In fact, one Naga I knew, Mangalgiriji, used to coil his penis up like a cobra, and after sucking up water through it and filling his bladder, would spray out the water like a fountain for the amusement of the children who would follow him around.

Anyway, one Naga would look at a female Nagi and would elongate his penis and then he would say, "Ha, look at this. Can you do anything like this? Is not mine a fine siddhi?'' And she would sneer at him and say, "Wah, wah. Why should you crow over such a minor achievement? Bring that thing over here.'' And the moment the head of his penis would touch her vaginal lips he would get a shock, like an electrical shock but far more intense, like a thousand scorpions stinging him all at once. And you know how sensitive the tip of the penis is. So he would learn his lesson well and proper.

When they talk about being naked, or *digambara* ("sky-clad"), which is one of the epithets of Dattatreya, the first aghori, they are not talking about external clothes; they are talking about the three coverings of the Atman—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. These are the clothes which have to be removed. And once they are gone it doesn't matter what you wear on the external body; you wear whatever is appropriate. Once you get used to being naked in this way you are not affected by anything.

Even when I was a Naga I used to wear one article of apparel: my *jata* (matted locks, dreadlocks). I know a method to make hair grow ten times faster than normal, and my jata used to reach down to my ankles. A sadhu's jata is his most precious possession. Why? Each hair is an antenna, an aerial to accumulate knowledge from everywhere. No true sadhu ever cuts his jata; he breaks it, or it breaks by itself. Then he takes it to the Ganga and offers it to Ma, because the Ganga

always remains in the jata of Lord Shiva; that is why He is called Durjati, because His jata is so formidable.

But I did not come to this stage immediately. For the first six months I was in Girnar I cried every night. I was asking myself, "What am I doing here? Why am I not enjoying my life back in Bombay?" But I was very stubborn. I wouldn't go back because I knew what people would say. This has always been my principle; if you want to do a thing, do it right, do it thoroughly, or don't do it at all.

After that first six months, though, I forgot all about my old life and started to enjoy my new life. I developed a routine. Every morning at 3 a.m. I would take a bath in one of the small lakes in the Girnar hills. Then I would coat my body with ash from my dhuni and sit for my rituals. I made friends with all the animals there. Some people think that in the forest you are completely alone, but there is always someone watching you. The forest belongs to the animals, after all, and they are very anxious to know who has come to disturb them.

One night, after I began staying at my old Shiva temple, I saw a pair of eyes staring at me from beyond the fire. They didn't come any closer that night and soon disappeared. Over the next few nights they came closer and closer, and pretty soon a lion appeared. Eventually he came all the way to sit beside me. We became great friends. You know, Girnar is the last place in the world where Asian lions live. We became such good friends that when I had to leave Girnar he followed me five miles, and I had the greatest difficulty in driving him away. I called him Raja ("King"), and I called my female monkey Rani ("Queen").

Rani was completely devoted to me. Once she saved my life. I had a terrific fever; I was delirious, I couldn't do anything. Rani came near me to see what was wrong. She started to talk to me, in her own way, but I was so delirious I couldn't understand and brushed her away. She persisted and in my semiconscious condition I threatened her with a firebrand, which I would have never done normally. She backed off and then ran into the jungle.

Later when I was sleeping she came with some leaves that she had chewed into a paste. She put the paste into my mouth and as a reflex action I swallowed. Then I woke up because those were the most bitter leaves I had ever tasted. I spit most of the mass out, but I had swallowed some, enough to break the fever. That demonstrated to me that animals know these things.

When it was time for me to leave Girnar, I told her gently, "Rani, I am going away and I am not coming back." When she understood that I meant it, she immediately leapt into a well and drowned herself. Even my mother wouldn't have done that.

No, I have never worried about animals when I was in the jungle.

The forests are full of other dangers, though. It is great to be a sadhu —lord and master of all you survey. But you must always be wary, because solitude is the father of passion.

Once the Emperor Akbar asked his favorite courtier Birbal, "What is the father of passion?" Emperors are like that: suddenly for no reason whatsoever they ask the most unusual questions. Birbal had no ready answer and so Akbar told him "If you don't find out for me what is the father of passion within three months, your head will be disconnected from your shoulders." Birbal bowed low; what else could he do? His boss had given him an order.

After two and a half months Birbal had come nowhere near discovering the father of passion. He began to worry for his life. His daughter noticed his despondence and asked him the reason for it. When he told her she just giggled and said, "Call the Emperor for dinner." Meanwhile, she selected one of her serving maids who bore a certain resemblance to her and made the girl into her double.

When the Emperor came for dinner, Birbal had been sent out so that there were only two present: Akbar and his courtier's daughter. The delicious, rich food was washed down with two bottles of heavy wine, and soon the food, the low lights, and the wine went to the Emperor's head and he indicated to the young lady that he would be pleased to have her company in bed for the night. Birbal's daughter had of course anticipated this; it was part of her plan. She consented graciously and asked for a moment to ready herself. Leading Akbar to the bedchamber she sent in her double, the serving-girl, who enjoyed sex with the Emperor all night long and then returned to her own room after he slept.

When the Emperor awoke he was suddenly seized with remorse: "I have deflowered the daughter of my best friend. How will I ever face him again? How can I demonstrate my penitence for this lapse in my morality?" And he sent for Birbal's daughter.

She entered, laughing, which amazed Akbar, who was sure she would be sobbing and beating her breast. She said, "Refuge of the world, it was not I that you deflowered. It was my double," and produced the serving-maid for proof. Giggling, she continued, "I wanted to prove to you that solitude is the father of passion so that my father's head would be spared. Are you satisfied?"

Akbar was more than satisfied. In court that day he publicly congratulated Birbal for his brilliance, and for having such a brilliant daughter, and he made a gift of a large tract of land to the girl who had lost her virginity. As she happened to be thrilled that the Emperor had made love to her, the land was just an added bonus.

This is why it is so hard to be off in some cave somewhere and maintain your balance of mind. Temptations will come to you by the

dozen: celestial damsels, buxom country lasses, tribal wenches. You have to be thoroughly prepared so that you are ready for anything. But even if you are prepared, you can still make grave errors which might have lasting consequences. I know; I have myself erred.

Maya spares no one, and She never spared me either. Once in Girnar, when I had to urinate, I laid my fire tongs down on a rock, and when I came back it had turned into gold: I couldn't believe my eyes. I picked it up and marked the stone so that I could remember exactly where it was. My idea was to use it whenever I needed gold.

I went down to Junagadh town and sold the fire tongs to a goldsmith after breaking it into pieces; a gold fire tongs is of no use to a sadhu. Then I bought a new iron fire tongs and distributed the money I had realized from the sale of the gold.

When I got back to the place where the stone had been there was no mark, no sign I had ever been there, nothing. I tried several of the stones, but to no avail. I had tried to capitalize on it and had lost it as a punishment for forgetting to rely on Nature to provide for me.

How many people really rely on Nature? Once when I was in Girnar I decided to make a test. I went without food and water to see when God would come and feed me.

The first two days were awful; my head was splitting. On the third day I decided, ''If God does not come before sunset I am going to eat anyway and I will believe from then on that God is a real phony."

As the day wore on I was becoming more and more desperate for sunset, the hunger was so great and my head so painful. Suddenly about fifteen minutes before sunset a young girl whom I had never seen before came up to me and said, "Why are you making yourself starve like this? I have brought milk for you."

At first I wanted to grab the milk and drink it all at once, I was so hungry. But I had my position to consider. I had to continue with my arrogance, so I said, "Go, go on, get out of here." But I wondered how she knew I was hungry. When I asked her she said, "I can see it on your face." Then I felt ashamed; my facade was not as perfect as I had hoped.

She insisted I take the milk. Still I pretended to refuse it—and then she grabbed my matted locks and poured the milk down my throat. It was like nectar after not eating or drinking for three days, and then without my mentioning anything about my vow she said, "Now, has God fed you or not?" And then she disappeared. And from that day onward I know that God looks after everyone. I have been blessed by my mentor so that wherever I go I will always get my food and even cigarettes. Even if l go to the jungle, the monkeys bring me fruits. Am I not fortunate? My mentors were very good, really good, excellent.

Thanks to them I was able to perform sadhana in the Cave of the Sixty-Four Yoginis which was the high point of my stay in Girnar. You might try to visit this cave without an invitation. As you approach it, suddenly a giant cobra will rear toward you, standing bolt upright on his tail. If you know the proper mantra, you can immobilize him, no doubt, but then as you move on you will start to hear the sounds of wild spirits. Suppose you are successful at immobilizing all the spirits, which is highly unlikely. Then, as you proceed, suddenly you will fall for no apparent reason and break your leg. Out on a mountain with a broken leg near a cave with a well-deserved reputation for preventing the curious from visiting it, who will come to rescue you? There is no use in trying to enter this cave unless you have a good friend to pull strings on your behalf.

I was lucky; someone wanted me to perform this sadhana. Even so, I had to be purified first. I was given a small leaf, and I began to vomit and purge to remove all the worldly elements from my body. For the next two days I was not allowed to drink even water, and by the third day I was really almost unable to go on. Then I was invited into the cave, and a panel of beings—I can't explain what sort of beings—welcomed me as one of their own.

I am forbidden to discuss the nature of my sadhana there, but I can tell you this; the Yoginis are the companions of the Great Goddesses. This is a two-fold advantage: They can introduce you to the Great Goddesses, and they can teach you what they have been taught. Actually, Shakti is the same in any form; only the details of the manifestation differ. In the case of the Great Goddesses, the entire range of possibilities of Shakti are divided into nine or ten aspects. For the Sixty-Four Yoginis there are sixty-four aspects which when taken as a unified whole represent the totality of Shakti in the universe. To succeed at the sadhana of one or two is feasible; to succeed at all sixty-four is nigh unto impossible, but the benefits if you do succeed are unimaginable.

Eventually I was ordered to leave Girnar and return to the world. I never wanted to come back to civilization, but orders are orders. When I finally got back to Bombay after being in Girnar and then wandering about as a sadhu, I used to sit in a room where everything was black: walls, ceiling, furniture, floor, everything. I used to wear a black lungi and would smoke ganja all day long and drink imported whiskey straight from the bottle. I was in my own mood all day long and never slept; to rest I would lie down for a half hour or so. The more intoxicants I would take, the more alert and silent would I become.

Visitors would bring mad persons to me—stark raving, violently insane—and I would put them in my garden, and when I felt like it I

would go out and give them one slap. Immediately they would become all right.

I used to experiment with new ways of curing diseases also. Sometimes I would dispense the ashes from the pipes I had been smoking, and they would do the job. Sometimes I would blow a whistle and the disease would go away instantaneously. I enjoyed having fun like that. Everyone wondered how I did it, and no one could ever understand.

When too many people would start to come to me and I would become tired of all the rush, I would say, “I’m sorry, I’ve made a mistake. I’ve slipped up in my sadhana, so now all my power is finished,” and this would drive most of the people away. I have done that many times, because I love more than anything else to be alone.

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[1] This belief is still widespread. In late 2018 I again climbed Mount Girnar, in the company of thousands of others, most of them villagers whose faith in the mountain and in Lord Dattatreya is absolute.

CHAPTER SIX

MENTORS

Nature is very kind to me; in fact, as my friend Faram used to say, Nature is cockeyed to me. And that is because of my mentors. My mentors were very good. That's all I can say; my mentors were very good. Maybe it's true I was meant by Nature to succeed at all my sadhanas, but my mentors triggered me up and made me succeed. They were too good.

MY THREE MENTORS

WHILE I WAS IN GIRNAR, I spent most of my time in the smashan, just as I had been doing in Bombay and Benares. One day, a funeral party had brought the body of a young man to be burnt. While I was watching the tearful relatives arranging the pyre, I noticed a thin fakir standing nearby, very thin—just like a skeleton. As I watched, he walked over to the boy's parents and said, "What do you people think you are doing? This boy is not dead, he is just asleep."

The boy's father looked at him and said, "Why are you trying to interfere? Are you God or something that you can bring the dead back to life? Get out of here before I have you thrown out." But the fakir insisted that the boy was not dead, and I suppose that he insisted a little too much because then the boy's father hit him across the side of the head and a few drops of blood trickled down.

The old fakir wiped his forehead, saw the blood, looked at the man, and said, "So, you've made me red. Now I'll make this a red-letter day for you!" He walked over to the corpse and said, "Get up!" He gave it a nice kick. The corpse sat up.

Well, you should have seen the condition of the members of that funeral party. They ran as if they were being pursued by ghosts. I said to myself, "Oh, this fellow has something." The old man came over to me and took out his chillum and filled it with ganja. He offered it to me first, but I requested him to ignite it. When he inhaled, a flame a

foot high leapt from the chillum; that showed me that he was a veteran. He said to me, “So, you have come from Bombay,” and then he went on to tell me about my family, my life, and most everything else, and then asked, “Do you know who I am?”

Now someone, some ethereal being, had told me who he was.

And when I told the old man who he was, he was so amazed that he had to keep quiet. I became his disciple; he became my Senior Guru Maharaj. He eats sometimes, but only when he feels like it; he does love to drink tea, though. His eyes, which never blink, are the only things which would give him away; they are much sharper than an eagle’s. Otherwise he looks completely nondescript. And he is the shrewdest old man possible. If he wants to trick you, he’ll do it in such a way that he’ll have you admiring him for it. And if he wants to make you rich, nothing can stand in his way.

There was a friend of mine who owned three cars and was a well-todo businessman. As his destiny would have it, he fell on hard times and had to hock all three of his automobiles. My Senior Guru Maharaj had come to Bombay then, and one fine day decided he wanted to go for a drive. I immediately thought of my friend and told him, “This is your golden opportunity. Take my Senior Guru Maharaj out for a drive and then he’ll do anything for you.”

My friend laughed and said, “I don’t have a car anymore.” I told him, “Beg, borrow, or steal, but locate one.” He was somehow able to redeem one of his cars, and we got it onto the road—without any fuel in it. He told me, “Look, I’ve come to the end of my money; how can we drive without any gas?” We considered the possibilities, then got in touch with someone we knew who had an account at a petrol pump. We drove over there and filled the tank on credit. Ready to go!

After his ride, my old man was feeling expansive, as I knew he would, and he looked over to my friend and asked him, “How much money do you need?” He replied, “300,000 rupees.”[1] My Senior Guru Maharaj twirled his mustache for a moment, and then pulled off one of the rings on his fingers. He said to my friend, “This ring is for Saturn. Put it on and go to sleep for an hour, and then let me know what you see or hear.” My friend and I had a low opinion of the whole drama, but he went off to sleep in the next room.

Meanwhile the old man and I were having a discussion. He was telling me, “I want you to go out and borrow as much money as you can at any rate of interest, even 1,000 percent per day.” I thought he was up to his old tricks again. One of his peculiarities is that you can give him any amount of money, even 10 million rupees, and within half an hour he’ll come back to you and tell you he has spent all of it and needs more. The last time he was in Bombay, I warned a certain maharani about him. I told her, “Give him anything he wants to eat—

meat, fish, anything he wants. If he wants clothes, give him clothes. Give him perfume, give him flowers, give him anything you please, but don't give him any money." I had to leave Bombay for some time, and when I returned she told me, "I lost 10,000 rupees." I told her, "Look, I even took an oath from you that you wouldn't give him a *paisa* (a fraction of a cent)." She said, "I don't know what came over me." I know what came over her—but that's a different story.

So, I thought he just wanted some money and was going to leave me in the lurch again. You have no idea how I pacified the maharani and eventually arranged to have her reimbursed; and I had no intention of doing that all over again. I told him as much, and he told me there was nothing to worry about, and while we were arguing in this fashion, my friend came back from his sleep and announced, "I've seen two numbers."

At that time people used to bet on the opening and closing quotations of the New York Cotton Exchange. They would bet on the two numbers to the right of the decimal point, so we knew what the two numbers stood for. They happened to be the same double-digit number. My friend was impressed, because someone had told him the number over and over until he couldn't forget it. I was still doubtful.

My Guru Maharaj told me to go out and not to return until I had borrowed at least 10,000 rupees. I went to a moneylender, who explained all the interest rates and what-have-you to me, and I walked out of his shop with 9,000 rupees. That's the way they do things: They keep 10 percent as the first payment while they're charging you interest on the whole amount. When I got back to him, my Senior Guru Maharaj told me to put all of it on the numbers. I flatly refused. Wasn't it enough to have contracted a debt of 10,000 rupees? If I was to lose all the money, I would be in a truly pitiable plight. My old man told me, "All right, I know you have no faith. Do one thing: bet 5,000 rupees, and 1,000 rupees more for me." "You?" I asked. "What is the guaranty I'll ever be paid again? I know all about you."

He looked at me and twirled his mustache, and said, "I still have this, don't I?" My Senior Guru Maharaj was an emperor at one time, in this same body, long, long ago. I've seen his sword; I've seen coins with the imprint of his face stamped on them. And in this part of the world, a king's mustache or beard is equivalent to his honor, so to swear to me on his mustache that he would repay me showed the seriousness of the whole thing.

Still, I warned him: "Listen, if you are just going to mess everything up again, I am going to cut your throat from ear to ear; this time I've had enough." He told me, "My child, I will cut my own throat if I fail to deliver for you."

There was nothing else left to say. I bet 6,000 rupees at 90 to 1.

We sat around waiting for the results. I had lost all hope until the news came: The first number had come correct. I felt relieved and immediately said, “Let’s cancel the bet,” because you could get paid 7 to 1 or something like that if the first number alone came. The old man told me, “No, we’ve done it, now we’re going to see it through to the end.”

When the second number came my astonishment knew no bounds: more than half a million rupees! Immediately my Senior Guru Maharaj said, “Repay your loan.” After that, and after giving my friend what he needed and pocketing my share because I was also broke at the time, I tried to give him his part of the winnings. “Now do you believe I kept my word?” he taunted me. “Take the 1,000 rupees which were in question and hire a musician so that I can enjoy a nice night. That’s all I want.” We had beautiful music all night long, and the next day my friend, who had been impressed with the old man’s power, told him, “My sister has been in bed between sandbags for the past six months with a broken spine. Can you do anything about it?” The old man went to see her and gave her a hard slap—and in that instant she became well, perfectly healed.

After finishing all the work, my Senior Guru Maharaj took his ring back from my friend—he is very careful about such useful objects—and then he told him, “I’ll see that you get heaps and heaps of wealth, more than you can even dream of, but you must stop your whoring and wining.” My friend looked at him and said, “What would I do with heaps and heaps of money? How would I spend it? No thanks; I prefer to enjoy.” And then it was the old man’s turn to be astonished at how perverse human beings can be!

Once in 1966 or 1967, when he spent four months with me and my foster daughter in Bombay, she and I and a few others were all sitting talking together. My foster daughter had been pestering him for days to show her his true form; when she would ask, he would tell her, “I know who has been putting such things into your head,” with a pointed glance at me. “Don’t pay any attention to him; are such things possible? My real form is the one you see right here.” But a woman never gives up once she has set her mind to something, and this girl pestered him and pestered him until finally he said to her, “How big was your father?” Now, her father was a very hefty man, and fairly tall as well. When she told him all this he said, “Bring me one of your father’s coats.” She did, and he put it on. It fit him terribly, or rather we thought it would because he is so thin, but suddenly we saw that he had filled up the entire coat until it was bursting at the seams, and he had become so tall his head was near the ceiling. Then he caught himself and said to her, “If I show you fully, your ceiling will break, and you will not be able to exist,” and he became his normal size

again. But she had had her glimpse. Then he told her, “By seeing this, have you been helped in any way? Ask me for something that is of some use to you.”

Usually, however, you cannot convince him to do anything. Even if you throw the filthiest language at him, he will say, “Those are all old words; why not try to think of some new ones?” He loves to play about and can be really jolly sometimes but look out when he means business. For giving spiritual knowledge, there is no one to beat him anywhere in the world; even my Junior Guru Maharaj admits it. And if you ask him for spiritual knowledge, he will ask you in return, “Are you ready to be flayed alive?” meaning, are you ready for all your karmas to be ripped from you? If you say yes, you will suffer more terribly than you could ever dream you could suffer, but when you come through it, you will be ready. Put through the fire, gold becomes impervious to everything, and so will you.

No one can fool him unless they play music for him. People have made millions out of him just as they have from me simply by making him hear music. When he is overwhelmed by emotion, he might even give you the results of thousands of years of his penance; then later he will realize what he has done and beg some favor from you in return. He’s really very sweet that way. He should be generous, having been a king. Even now some of that regality, that kingliness remains, despite the fact that when he left his throne for his sadhana he renounced everything. Nowadays, you can’t even meet him if you want to; no one knows where he has gone, except me. He is by himself, and he is no longer in his normal senses. He has gone mad with love for Krishna.

He was the one to tell me that I would have to go to a guru from the south, my Junior Guru Maharaj. I call him my Junior Guru Maharaj because he is a disciple of my Senior Guru Maharaj. So, I am not only his disciple, I am his *gurubhai* (co-disciple) also. He says frankly that when he was young my Senior Guru Maharaj used to feed him and look after him—so imagine how old my Senior Guru Maharaj must be.

No one knows how old either of them might be, but if you look in my Junior Guru Maharaj’s mouth, you will see two full sets of teeth, one row right behind the other.[2] They say you grow a new tooth after every 100 years; I don’t know. If I tell you his origin, you won’t believe me. When Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India at the turn of the century, archaeological excavations were going on in the state of Orissa, and in some temple ruins they discovered the perfectly preserved body of an old sadhu.[3] Someone thought to call a man from the Jagannath temple in Puri who knew about samadhi and such things, and after massage and oil rubs, and I don’t know what else, he

was able to bring the sadhu down from his samadhi and back in to consciousness of the world. That sadhu is my Junior Guru Maharaj. I have met people who have known him ever since then and they say his looks have not changed in the least up to the present day, except that in some places his hair has grayed.

How I met him is a story in itself. I have always been fond of maharajas, emirs, and other rulers, and they have always been fond of me; there must be some link. I was trying to help a certain prince succeed his father as maharaja, and one day I happened to ask an acquaintance if he knew of any sadhu who could help us out with his spiritual powers. He brought this sadhu to us.

At first glance he didn't look like much to me. Driving home from the railway station, this prince was telling the old sadhu about how his father was ruining the administration of the state, and how well he would be able to rule if given an opportunity. Finally, the old man spoke: "So you want your father to die, eh?" And as soon as we got down from the car and crossed the threshold into the house, word arrived from Delhi that the prince's father had died very suddenly. I thought to myself, "Yes, this man has some power!"

At the time I was broke, and desperate, and there were races that day. I had decided to go and bet on the horses and sink or swim. When I told this to the sadhu, he took my wallet from me and put a pinch of ash into it and said to me, "Keep this with you and bet on whatever you see and hear." I laughed in his face and told him, "Maharaj, this is Bombay, people are not such fools here to believe such nonsense." See and hear, indeed! Still, I kept the envelope in my pocket and left for the races.

Because he had insisted on sitting and chatting with me, I was late to arrive and missed the first three races. I started cursing him because my choices had won two of those races. Unnecessarily, I had wasted my opportunity to make money just because of some old fool and his ash! I decided to go back to him in the evening and beat him black and blue.

While I was mired in this depression, I was standing under a tree near the bookies' enclosure, and I suddenly heard something telling me to bet on a certain horse. I didn't believe I was hearing it at first, but once I believed, I decided to see what sort of a horse it was. Well, on the racing form it was hopeless; besides that, the jockey, Ghuman Singh, had never won a race in his life. I thought, "When he doesn't know what he's doing, why should the old man try to show off? How can I waste money on his guesswork?" I decided to bet on another horse, my own choice, and told the number, which was seven, to the clerk in the betting window. He accidentally gave me six fifty-rupee tickets on the horse whose number I had heard; his number was eight.

When I realized this mistake, I bellowed to change the tickets, but it was too late; the race had started and the shutters on the betting windows had slammed down.

I started cursing the old man more vehemently than before: “My last 300 rupees, which I’ve been saving for an emergency, and I’ve wasted it! What did I do to be introduced to such an unlucky old man?” Running this thought over and over in my mind, I sat and watched the horse win. I couldn’t believe it; I was rich! He paid 70 to 1. Incidentally, that was the one and only race Ghuman Singh ever won in his entire life.

I had to admit my mistake, and I started listening to the voice much more seriously. Over the whole day I made 59,000 rupees, and after the last race I went to a bar on Charni Road and had a few more than my quota of drinks. I had made up my mind: “I must keep a tight grip on this sadhu; he can make millions for me!”

It sounds ludicrous, doesn’t it? But I was desperate for money. Of course, I could have gone to the smashan and collected millions without working up a sweat, but I will never ask money from a spirit. Here was an old man, though, who seemed ready to provide me with winners just for the asking, and he would bear the karma! It seemed too good to be true.

When I got back to the sadhu, he became wild with me the moment I stepped through the door: “Ha, how dare you drink, what do you think of yourself?” and so on. I coolly took the money I had made, laid it at his feet, and told him, “Maharaj, please take as much as you like; just agree to help me again next week.”

This only made him wilder. He told my friends, “Go make him vomit and give him an enema.” They worked me over so well that by midnight I was almost sober again. When I went back into the sadhu’s presence, he was still so infuriated that he took his fire tongs and gave me two whacks squarely across the right temple: ptak! ptak! And then he told me, “Did you take birth for things like this?”

I had to tell him no, because those two blows gave me partial memory of my previous births, and I understood why I had been born where I was and what was expected of me in this life. This is why I respect him as my guru: not because he initiated me into a mantra, but because he helped me remember who I am.

Maybe I should explain one thing here. Gambling has a catastrophic effect on the mind. Meat, alcohol, sex: these all cause temporary ruination of the consciousness, but the effects of gambling are permanent. If a man earns money at gambling, what does he spend it on? Rich food, alcohol and other intoxications, and women. If he loses money what happens? Envy, hatred: “That fellow cheated me, he was out to get me, now I’ll show him, I’ll ruin him.” The man

becomes a cutthroat, literally, if he is of the lower class of men, because he kills to regain his losses. Or, if he is more refined, he kills his enemy economically. Gambling is one of the three karmas which cannot be obliterated in the same lifetime; the other two are murder of the guru and rape.

This being the case, how can both my Junior and Senior Guru Maharajs have helped me through gambling? First of all, they never encouraged me to gamble, and they have always done their best to prevent me from doing so. But in both these instances they knew I was out of money and this was the most convenient way for them to help me; and they wanted to convince me of their abilities as well. And don't forget: this was really nothing like gambling. They knew ahead of time what was going to happen, and they just handed that information over to me. It's more like collecting interest on an investment than gambling. They do have to suffer for using their powers for such trivial things, of course, because no one is exempt from the Law of Karma. But they know how to minimize the penalty, and they don't bother about such minor troubles. And besides, they are not in the habit of doing it daily; once only, to serve their purposes. And very strange indeed are their purposes.

By doing this, they saved me from an evil fate. I just told you that gambling is a permanent disease, and it was as true for me as for anyone else. But they cured me of it. Not that I gave it up altogether; I still bet whenever I see a good thing, or when one of my own horses is running, and I enjoy directing how my horses work and deciding which races to run them in. It's a wonderful sport, horse racing.

But I was an inveterate gambler, uncontrollable; and my Junior Guru Maharaj brought me under control. I gamble now, but gambling doesn't control me like it once did; I control it. This does not mean you should gamble. I have known only a handful of people to enter the racecourse and then leave it again before losing their money, character, or balance of mind. I was exceedingly lucky, because my Guru Maharaj was willing to take my evil karmas on himself. He knew exactly how to deal with them. Truly, my mentors are wonderful, and they have always been so gentle and kind to me, I don't know why.

My Junior Guru Maharaj can also be extremely strict when necessary—no mistake about it. There was one Behari Das who lived near him several years ago. Behari Das was a good aghori, but something of a bully: he would trouble all the other sadhus in the area. They would come down with diseases, and Guru Maharaj would cure them. Behari Das came to know what Guru Maharaj was doing and his ego was hurt: "Who is this fellow trying to undo what I do? I must kill him." But how to kill him? Guru Maharaj doesn't eat or drink, so there was no possibility of poisoning him that way. Does he

smoke ganja? Yes.

So one day Behari Das came to meet Guru Maharaj and told him, “Maharaj, I have decided that I must make you smoke this chillum of ganja as a token of my respect for you.” I happened to be there at the time and I immediately knew what Behari Das had in mind. I said, “Why should Guru Maharaj take anything from you? I will smoke it.”

Behari Das got wild: “Who are you to interfere? My desire is to see Maharaj smoke this chillum.” Guru Maharaj said to me, “Don’t worry, Babuji, I’ll smoke it.” The chillum was lit and in two puffs—only two—Guru Maharaj finished the whole thing and then put it big end down on the ground.

Then Guru Maharaj said to Behari Das, “Behari Das, I know why you wanted me to smoke that chillum; I know what sort of love you have for me. Unfortunately for you, your time is up. You have only five minutes left. Now get out of this ashram.” And in five minutes he was dead. As for Guru Maharaj, he had to suffer terribly for six months: boils on his body, dimness of vision, and so on.

I have also been troubled by such people. There is a fellow in Bombay[3] who has tried to poison me three times with ganja mixed with arsenic, aconite, and so on, and each time he lands himself in the hospital and then begs me to cure him. But I also have to suffer for some time; that is just the way things work.

My Junior Guru Maharaj is really an unusual old man. He has roamed all over the world, but no one knows how he does it. When one fellow asked if he had been to London, he replied, “Yes, they have a railway there that goes under the ground; I’ve seen all those things.” And when this fellow asked him how long ago he was there he told him, “Four hundred years.” What can you say about that?

He is a type entirely different from my Senior Guru Maharaj: a miser. He will not let anything out; he is just like a stone. In fact, he will advise you, “Become just like a Shiva Linga.” What he means is, don’t let anything affect you. No happiness, no sorrow, nothing: absolutely firm. When he goes anywhere, he will sit in one room only, never going out or moving around. Sometimes he stays in one place for twelve years at a time. He never eats or drinks; at the most he takes cow’s milk if you really force him to. And once he leaves a place, he will never go back there. He is still very old-fashioned and believes strongly in purity and impurity, because he is still doing his sadhana every day. You see, he has done terrific sadhana all his life. He has done such penances that even my Senior Guru Maharaj has admitted that there is no one in India, and that means in the world, to beat him at doing penances.

He is very strict, but he loves to play about in his own way. His play is of a different age. He believes in sacrifice and he expects

everyone else to also, so he will frequently cause trouble for someone in order to pull that person out of some entanglement. Of course, he doesn't actually cause the trouble. He just causes certain karmas to come out of that person's causal body and be projected. Since he always causes the bad karmas to be projected, to purge the causal body of all its evil influences, this will always lead to misery.

No one wants to accept responsibility. They want to enjoy all their good karmas and avoid all the bad ones. One day a man had a nice dinner of very spicy food full of chilies, followed by ice cream. Next morning when he squatted to defecate, he screamed, "Ice cream first! Ice cream first!" Only when you are miserable will you remember God; you will never think of Him otherwise, unless you are a true saint. Guru Maharaj is here to make people remember God, not to make them rich or famous. I will give you a written guaranty, if you like, to the effect that, after you meet Guru Maharaj, everything will start going wrong in your life. That's just the way he works, the old, crude way. But that's the way he is.

Once a friend of mine came and asked me to take him to Guru Maharaj. I knew what sort of person this fellow was. He was called Balayogi ("Child Yogi") or Kaviraj ("King of Poets") and he used to sing devotional songs in praise of the Divine Mother: "Jaya Ambe, Jaya Ambe" and so on. He liked most to have plenty of female disciples: you know what I'm getting at. His brother was dead, and he made a big show out of taking care of his brother's widow. Actually, he developed an illicit relationship with her. I thought it only fair to warn him: "Watch out—Guru Maharaj may do something." He told me, "Ha, you only want to keep him for yourself; why not let other people get the benefit of his powers? I'm sure he'll give me something." I had warned him; my job was over.

You know, when I visit my Guru Maharaj, I don't say anything. I sit in one corner. When I feel like it I get up and walk out. Everyone else thinks that I am very rude and insolent and very foolish for not sitting with him. Only he and I know what is going on. When he was last in Bombay, he would make everyone go to sleep and then we would exchange the notes in our own way, a way in which words are not required.

I am most shameless; I fight with my Guru Maharaj. I tell him, "What is the use of an ashram? The whole world should be your ashram." Then he gets wild on me. It is only in the past few years that he has had an ashram, and only now his hair is starting to turn grey. It was always jet black before.

So, this friend and I went to Guru Maharaj, who was in Bombay at the time, in 1959. Now, you don't need to tell anything to Guru Maharaj: all he has to do is look at you and he knows every bit. And

this fellow made another mistake; he started to recite Sanskrit verses to Guru Maharaj, trying to show off his wisdom. After being awakened from his long samadhi, Guru Maharaj spent twelve years on the branch of a tree doing japa, never touching the ground even once; could this man teach him anything?

Suddenly Guru Maharaj smiled, scribbled something down on a piece of paper, and handed it to my friend, telling him, "Keep this with you always. Wave incense before it daily, when you sit for worship, sit on top of it, then put it under your pillow when you sleep." As we left, my friend smiled knowingly at me and said, "So Guru Maharaj did something good for me after all." But I knew better. I could see that Guru Maharaj was going to have this man's hide. What happened? Kaviraj went directly to his sister-in-law's house to celebrate with a little sex. But as soon as she saw him she shouted, ''How dare you drink bhang and come here? Get out!"

He looked at her and said, "But I never drank any bhang today." She screamed, "Don't say anything to me, just get out. I never want to see you here again!" and she gave him a beautiful pair of slaps and shut him out of the house. He spent the night on the front steps and had to do without his morning tea as well.

The next morning, he came crying to me: "Look what that Guru Maharaj of yours has done to me!"

I told him, "What did I tell you before?"

He replied, "You must take me back to your Guru Maharaj, so that he can free me from this."

We went back to Guru Maharaj, who heard all the complaints and then said to Kaviraj, "I did it to clean out your karmas." Kaviraj said, "But I never asked to have my karmas cleaned out!" Then Guru Maharaj told him, "If you are tired now, take that piece of paper and throw it into the sea." He did, and afterward he was reconciled with his sister-in-law and continued with his life as before. And whenever anyone would ask him about Guru Maharaj, he would say, "Please, he really put me in the soup. I don't want to hear about him."

After Kaviraj left the room, I asked Guru Maharaj, "When you know these people can't take it, why do you do such things?"

Guru Maharaj laughed and said to me. "No, Babuji, that was a yantra I gave him. If he had kept it, he would have broken off from that lady for good and would have quit all his evil ways. Then he would have had to turn to God. He knew so many verses and sang such nice songs, he should have been made a saint."

It's useless trying to argue with Guru Maharaj. He thinks he is still living in a previous era, and he expects everyone else to act accordingly. It is true that when your plans go wrong you have to turn

to God, but that is the old, crude method; no one will put up with it today. Nowadays only those people who can't be successful at anything else turn to God: *Asamartho bhavet sadhuh*—"A man fit for nothing else becomes a sadhu". But what is the use of that? Still, Guru Maharaj goes on feeding bitter medicine to whoever comes to him. People curse him, but he never bothers about it. Very few will ever be able to understand his play.

In spite of all this, I still fight with my Guru Maharaj. Once, when I went to meet Guru Maharaj, he was talking to a businessman from Bombay. The businessman was sitting there with his mistress, ignoring the fact that Guru Maharaj is very strict about those things. His morality is of another age. Why, when he came to Bombay and saw a woman driving a car, he was so shocked that he told me, "Babuji, now I know Kali Yuga is really here." I don't know what he would do if he ever saw a woman flying an airplane.

As I was about to enter, I saw a lady crying on the steps outside the room. I have done sadhana of Ma all my life, and I just cannot bear to see a woman cry; it is as if my own Mother is crying. So I asked her, "Ma, why are you crying?" She told me, "Sadhugaru (meaning Guru Maharaj) will not allow me to enter his presence today." It was because she was in her periods.

Then I lost my temper. I stormed into the room and asked Guru Maharaj what he meant by forcing the lady to sit outside like that. I told him, "She is only menstruating. I am an aghori. I worship menstrual fluid because it has the power to create. Though you have performed Aghora sadhanas, you seem to have forgotten all that. A woman cannot conceive before her periods commence or after they cease, so the power of creation lies in that only. Can you create?"

Not only that, you are sitting here with a woman who is no better than a prostitute, and you have the nerve to tell this poor lady who has come so many miles to see you that she may not enter the room. Who do you think you are?"

The fellow whose mistress I had insulted tried to protest, but Guru Maharaj told him to be quiet and said to me, "Wah, Babuji, you have really become a true aghori now. Your Aghora has become perfect. I only told her to wait outside because I am doing a certain ritual for which I needed to observe purity, that is the only reason. Please don't misunderstand." He just smiled at me and shook his head, and then I lost all my anger also. He is really a wonderful old man.

I can afford to argue with my Senior Guru Maharaj as well as with my Junior Guru Maharaj because they are something different from all the saints and sadhus that you will ever find in India. But even they have to respect my real mentor. I won't tell you His name; I will just call Him "my Mahapurusha," because I love Him as my own. Even

though I have treated those two as my gurus, they have never given me a Guru Mantra. My Mahapurusha is my real guru.

You know, I have seen all the big so-called saints, but none of them interests me after knowing Him. If you ask my Junior Guru Maharaj about my Mahapurusha, Guru Maharaj will say, "He is God Himself." If you ask my Senior Guru Maharaj about Him, tears will come from his eyes and he will say, "If you can give me only a glimpse of Him, I will make you the richest man in the world"—and he can do it, too. My Mahapurusha is thirty feet tall—yes, thirty feet. His eyes are the size of your hand. His head is as wide as your chest. I used to sit in the palm of His hand very comfortably, as if I were a pygmy, and we would play together—at a time when I weighed 210 pounds. Once He said to me, "I want to sit on your lap." My God, what a fright I got; I was afraid my bones would break! But when He sat down He did not have the weight of even a rose petal; it was just as if a feather was there.

My Mahapurusha believes in gratification, satisfaction, so that no stain of desire is left. Sometimes we would be sitting in Girnar and He would say, "Let's have lunch at Maxim's. Close your eyes." I would close my eyes, and when I would open them we would be at a good table in Maxim's in Paris, appropriately dressed, He reduced to ordinary human size. We would have a delicious twelve-course lunch there, and then—back to Girnar.

One day I had just finished a tough ritual, and I was sitting around kind of bored when He came up and said to me, "What are you doing, moping around like that? Come on! Let us have our worldly enjoyments!"

I asked, "Where are we going?" He said, "You be quiet and close your eyes." I did, and when I opened them, we were in Spain. I got the shock of my lifetime. We were both dressed like Spaniards, and we went to a night club. So many beautiful senoritas were there. We danced the tango with them all night long. All the men gathered at the sides of the club and glared at us! So jealous they were! And "La Paloma" was playing. After tangoing for some time, my Mahapurusha looked at me warningly, and then we went outside and zip! Back to Girnar. Worldly enjoyments along with sadhanas; what a guru!

He is far, far ahead. I used to smoke twenty pounds of ganja a day, because I know the mantra which nullifies the bad effects. But He has no need of mantras. No one can know Him. Don't even talk about it. When He would sit with the sadhus in Girnar, He would take His pipe —an elephant's tusk—and fill it full of ganja. He would light it and finish the whole pipe full in one puff, throw the pipe high into the air, shout "Jai Girnari!" and vanish. He has no limits at all.

Once we were sitting together in a circle, and one old fakir began

to complain that there was no one around who could do miracles like the great saints of the old days could, especially the art of creating gold.

My Mahapurusha didn't say anything to him but pointed at the Nandi of a nearby Shiva temple and said, "Get up!" The bull, which was made of stone, stood up. My Mahapurusha told him, "You've been hungry for so many ages. Now eat!" And the bull ate some of the green grass growing near him. Then, "Drink!" The bull took a long drink of water. Finally the bull was told, "Go over to that old fakir and give him what he wants!" The bull ambled over to the fakir, who had opened his mouth wide in amazement in the first place. He turned his behind to that astonished old man and defecated—pure gold. When he had finished he was told, "Now go back and wait," and he went back to his pedestal, sat, and became completely stone again, waiting for the next time he would be awakened.

The old fakir had tears in his eyes, but my Mahapurusha was gone. His method of teaching is something else also; something quite different. First, He makes you sit down, tells you to close your eyes and then gives you a good slap with His left hand. You go into a trance and when you wake up, after a few hours or a few days, He is gone, but you have learned everything about the subject He was teaching you. Don't ask me how. He never eats or drinks, of course; His only enjoyment in life is to smoke ganja. Once a poor girl came to Him. Her parents had been beating her because she was hungry and had been stealing food from them. He told her, "Ma, why do you worry? Take this, and you will never have to eat or drink again." He gave her a pinch of ash from His bag, and what He had said happened: she never ate or drank anything from that day onward. I met her when I was in Girnar.

But my Mahapurusha has left Girnar, and no one knows where to find Him, except me. He belongs to me, and I belong to Him; we are pals.

It is thanks to my Mahapurusha that I have achieved whatever I have achieved in this lifetime. He has looked after me well since I was born, through the medium of Haranath Thakur, my parents' guru. Years before he ever met my parents or became a guru, Haranath was traveling in a one-horse carriage through Kashmir when, at a stop along the way, he suddenly fell down. He knew he was dying, and he did die.

When he was dead my Mahapurusha came to him. He never knew who my Mahapurusha was; I was told the whole story later by my "Big Daddy." My Mahapurusha said to him, "Do you know you are dead?"

He said, "Yes."

"Do you have any desires left?" "Yes, I want to meet my Mother."

Then my Mahapurusha cut his body into sixty-four pieces and threw three pieces away. Can you guess which three pieces were thrown away? The Three Gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. He put the other sixty-one pieces together again and suddenly the man came back to life, and was given instructions by my Mahapurusha. Eventually he became my parents' guru, and in that way my Mahapurusha could look after me while I was growing up. Haranath always used to tell my parents, "My boy," meaning me, "will move about in fine suits of clothes and no one will ever know him." It is only thanks to my Mahapurusha that I have survived for so long here in the world. It was He who sent me back here from Girnar, otherwise I would never have left. And now, whenever I hear "La Paloma" I am reminded of Him. People have made millions of rupees out of me just by playing "La Paloma," because whenever I hear it I am overcome with love for my Mahapurusha, and in that outpouring of longing for Him somehow the work gets done. I could not bear living for even a moment in the world if it were not for Him supporting me. If you had ever lived the free life of a sadhu, you would know what I mean. To have lived free and then to be caged up is enough to kill most wild animals; it would have killed me, had not my Mahapurusha had some work He wanted me to do. Let any other being in the universe come to me and I don't bother with them; for me, only my Mahapurusha exists.

DEVOTION TO THE GURU

Do you know the story of Meera, the great devotee of Krishna? When Krishna stood before her in all his bewitching beauty as a result of the method of sadhana that she had been taught by her guru Raidas, she composed a lovely Hindi couplet on the spot: "My guru and my beloved deity Govinda both stand before me; to whom shall I first prostrate myself? I must first pay my respects to my guru, because it was he who showed me Govinda." Such devotion always pays dividends. Meera understood how important it is to have a guru, how much the disciple owes the guru. Most knowledge you can pick up from somewhere, but until you put it into practice it remains as a mere intellectual understanding. The guru forces you to learn it, he rubs your face into the ground until you learn it, if he is a real guru. That is why I say that none of the people you have in America can be classified as gurus. They teach a little to the students who come to them, and they collect money for it.

If you are interested in making money out of someone, you can't afford to offend them or else they'll immediately run away to someone else. A real guru doesn't care for money: he wants a disciple he can be

proud of. And he will tear that disciple to pieces if necessary in order to make sure that certain lessons get learned. Then, when that disciple gets an opportunity to meet a deity, or a Siddha, or some other Mahapurusha, there is no question of the disciple making the wrong choice. The disciple's own personality has been so effaced by the guru, the false e-y-e (eye) consciousness has been so thoroughly crushed, that the disciple must make the right choice, and then he or she is made; there is no question of a doubt.

Eknath Maharaj was one of the greatest saints Maharashtra has ever produced. His guru's name was Janardan Swami, and in fact today people only know the name of Janardan Swami because he was Eknath's guru. This is the play of guru and disciple.

Eknath literally means "one master," and that fit Eknath perfectly. He was totally devoted to Janardan Swami. While still a boy, Eknath had heard a voice from the sky telling him to go to Janardan Swami, so he walked the 200 miles from his hometown to Deogarh where Janardan Swami was the ruler of the fort. For a number of years Eknath served Janardan Swami faithfully without being taught anything at all about spirituality. He never objected, never complained.

After some time, Janardan Swami put Eknath in charge of the treasury. One night, Eknath had some trouble balancing the books. His accounts were off by a single *pie* (a fraction of a cent). Late into the night he sat, trying his best to locate his error. When he suddenly discovered the elusive pie his joy was so great he shouted. This woke up Janardan Swami who came in and demanded to know what the boy was doing up so late at night. When he was told the story, Janardan Swami said to Eknath, "My son, if the discovery of a single pie which has been lost can cause you such great joy, can you imagine what your joy would be if you discovered God?"

Eknath replied humbly, "Maharaj, I don't know how to go about looking for God. Will you teach me?"

A few days later Janardan Swami told Eknath to accompany him on a trip outside Deogarh. The Swami was riding a horse, and Eknath had to run along behind it for fifty-five miles, during which time he did not get the opportunity to drink even a drop of water. Eknath did not complain.

Late that night, as Janardan Swami and his disciple sat quietly together in a lonely place, an unkempt man trailed by a dog came up to them. Handing a bowl to Eknath, he told him to milk the bitch and bring him the milk to drink. Even though Eknath had had nothing to quench his thirst all day long he was not tempted and brought the bowl back to the man, who drank it down. He then made Eknath milk the bitch again, and this milk he gave to Janardan Swami. When the

bowl was empty he told Eknath to go and wash it in a nearby stream.

Eknath had not been told anything, but he was convinced that the man was none other than Guru Dattatreya, the guru of the Naths, because Dattatreya is always accompanied by a dog and always affects a wild appearance, to scare away ordinary mortals. So Eknath poured a little water into the bowl to wash all the remaining drops of milk into the bottom and then drank down the mixture. Immediately he could see the man in his true form, and yes: it was Dattatreya himself. Dattatreya was pleased with Eknath's cleverness and blessed him. That was enough; Dattatreya's blessing was precious to Lord Shiva Himself, so what effect must it have had on Eknath? And this was all thanks to his unflinching devotion to his guru.

If you are out to locate a guru, it is best to look for a real one instead of all the fakes that are around nowadays, but it is not essential. If your desire is strong enough and your heart is pure enough, Nature will teach you Herself if need be. Remember the story of Ekalavya from the *Mahabharata* (the great Indian epic poem)? Because Ekalavya was a tribal, Dronacharya refused to teach him archery. So Ekalavya went out and made a statue of Dronacharya and worshiped it as his guru. He worshiped it so hard and so well that the statue eventually began to teach him, and he actually became a better archer than any of the direct pupils of Dronacharya.

Dattatreya himself had twenty-four gurus: birds, animals, beings who didn't know they were teaching him. By observation alone, he learned what they had to teach. But it is much easier to have a human guru. You must test your guru thoroughly to make sure he can teach you, but once you accept him as your teacher you must stick with him. There is no use in running from guru to guru; you will end up falling between two stools. Find one and stick to him. Don't be like the swan, who when her pond dries up flies off to find another one. Be like the moss, which dries up along with the stone which it covers. The moss sticks to the stone in good times and in bad times, without trying to calculate whether it is profitable or not.

Remember that when you love a guru you are not loving his external personality; you have to love his perennial personality, the Shiva-consciousness which he is trying to instill into you. That means that you are actually loving yourself; the Self is loving the Self. Instead of attempting to love the entire universe, you try to learn to love one person properly, because the Atman is the same in every being. And remember that no matter how much you love, or think you love, your guru, he loves you much, much more because he has already learned how to love the Infinite. He is trying to make you into his own guru: the One.

Once a moth, circling around a lamp, about to make the fatal

plunge, spoke to the flame: “What do you know of love? All you do is stand there as I whirl about you until I can no longer bear to remain separated from you and I embrace you. And in the moment I embrace you I am consumed, burned into nothingness.”

The flame smiled and replied, “You fool! Do you call that love? Look at me; I am burning. You burn only when you embrace me, but in my longing for you the pain of my separation from you has transmuted me into fire itself.”

This is what should happen in real life. A disciple may think he really loves his guru and has done a lot for him, but the disciple is too stupid to realize that his guru is absolutely burning to give something to him, to give his essence to the disciple. At first a disciple is nothing better than a prostitute; he flits from object to object, teaching to teaching, guru to guru, like a fly who enjoys sweets and filth equally. Little by little, the “child” loses his taste for other things and slowly develops devotion to his mentor. Only then does he realize that his guru is his All-in-One, One-in-All. Only then can the “child” merge with the mentor and receive what the mentor wants so intensely to give.

How many people can understand the play of guru and disciple? Almost no one. If the disciple himself can’t understand it, how will some outsider be able to? And this is true of all disciples, even those who may be great saints on their own, like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The first time Ramakrishna Paramahamsa visited Benaras he exclaimed that he saw heaps of gold in the city. He did not mean metallic gold, of course; he meant the gold of minds filled with the power of discrimination. When he visited Telang Swami, Ramakrishna was overcome with spiritual bliss and said openly, “I see before me the incarnation of Shiva,” meaning that Telang Swami had so perfected himself that there was no false personality remaining; all had become Shiva-consciousness.

Then he tried to speak with Telang Swami, but Telang Swami was observing complete silence, though he did deign to answer Ramakrishna’s questions by means of gestures alone. Ramakrishna repeated, “I see before me the incarnation of Shiva, but this is a selfish Shiva,” meaning that he was unwilling to part with any of his knowledge, to teach it to others. Ramakrishna was blind to say this. Can God ever be selfish? God is always magnanimous; if He isn’t, he isn’t God. That’s all there is to it. Telang Swami did not bat an eyelid but decided to teach Ramakrishna Paramahamsa a lesson. After Ramakrishna returned to his home in Dakshineshwar, a village near Calcutta, he began to become restless. Now, Ramakrishna was one of the greatest saints the world has ever produced. He achieved success at sadhanas of Jesus, of Mohammed, of so many forms of God, but his

success started with sadhana of a form of Kali called Bhavatarini.

He became very restless, so he asked Bhavatarini Ma, "Ma, You have showed me so many sadhanas of God with form, and also of God without form, but You have never showed me anything of Tantra. I want to learn about Tantra. Send me someone to teach me about Tantra." And thereafter, one day, a woman called the Bhairavi Brahmani arrived in Dakshineshwar and proceeded to teach Ramakrishna a bit about Tantra. And who was she? A little disciple of Telang Swami.

When all of Ramakrishna's Tantric sadhanas were over, he had occasion to go back to Benaras; actually Telang Swami dragged him without his knowing it. Ramakrishna had one of his devotees cook up an immense quantity of rice pudding, thirty or forty liters, and with his own hands Ramakrishna fed the entire amount to Telang Swami in thanksgiving. Telang Swami, who was a true Siddha, had no difficulty in consuming the whole cauldronful, but did not bother to look at Ramakrishna. And that was the last sadhana Ramakrishna Paramahamsa ever did; Tantra was the culmination of his sadhana. He did have to suffer for calling Telang Swami selfish, though; he developed cancer of the throat eventually, and died. It is never wise to insult Shiva, as that priest of Benaras learned about Telang Swami so many years before. So Telang Swami taught Ramakrishna a good lesson, didn't he? Just because he did not move his lips did not mean he was not teaching Ramakrishna; he did it with his fingers. Then he caused Ramakrishna to develop the desire to learn Tantra. There was no need for Ramakrishna to have such a desire otherwise. It was all the play of Telang Swami, who contacted him from a distance and disturbed his mind to demonstrate what child's play it was to direct his consciousness. It was all the magnanimity of Telang Swami; otherwise Ramakrishna would never have had the opportunity to learn Tantra.

GURU AND DISCIPLE

You know, getting a good disciple is a real boon. To get a good guru is the best blessing, no doubt, but to get a good disciple is really rare. The rishis, of course, bring their own with them when they come, just as Krishna and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa did.

The Naths are a tribe of immortal aghoris. Once Matsyendra Nath, the direct disciple of Adi Nath, who is Lord Shiva, wanted to test his pet disciple Gorakh Nath. You know, for a sadhu his dhuni is his TV. He looks into it and can know anything that is going on anywhere in the world. One night, as Gorakh was sitting on his dhuni, he saw his Guru Maharaj in Assam in the company of dancing girls and thought

“Oh my God! Guru Maharaj has become entangled in the samsara! He is in danger of losing everything that he has gained through his penances! I must go and save him. Matsyendra is mine, he belongs to our tribe of Naths. He is not meant for these things.” Gorakh had intense possessive love for his Guru Maharaj.

So Gorakh journeyed to Assam, disguised as a minstrel. When he located his guru, Matsyendra, he was drinking wine and had two girls on his lap, one on each thigh, with a hand on one breast of each. Gorakh, still in disguise, began singing a song: “Look, Matsyendra, Gorakh has come; remember who you are and forget this Maya.”

But Matsyendra did not want to leave. Gorakh literally had to force him to start the long journey back to Girnar. Along the way, Matsyendra went off for a bath, leaving his shoulder bag with Gorakh for safekeeping. Gorakh thought that it felt quite heavy, and when he opened it two gold bars fell out. He became wild and thought to himself, “What is wrong with my Guru Maharaj? He is a Nath; he can piss on a rock and turn it into gold. I will not allow him to become entangled in Maya,” and he threw both bars as far as he could into the jungle.

Finally, they arrived in Girnar and Gorakh said, “Now Guru Maharaj, do you remember who you are?” He was feeling very proud of having walked 3,000 miles to save his Guru Maharaj from the clutches of the world.

Suddenly Matsyendra Nath passed his hand over Gorakh’s head, and Gorakh Nath realized that all that he thought had happened had been an illusion, and that in fact neither of them had even left Girnar. And then Gorakh Nath realized how foolish he had been to imagine that his Guru Maharaj could ever become enmeshed in Maya. But Matsyendra loved his disciple all the more, seeing that Gorakh loved his guru enough to search him out and force him back to his senses.

Of course, you can’t expect ordinary people to play about like aghoris do. Only aghoris really know how to play about—and Naths are aghoris, nothing else. But to understand their play is extremely difficult. The ordinary seeker may feel revulsion when he hears about using wine in rituals or seating a naked girl on the left thigh with a hand on her left breast and her hand on his penis. That is how Dattatreya got rid of all his so-called disciples except one, who became the Adi Nath. Dattatreya was the guru of Lord Shiva himself, the Lord of Aghoris.

Dattatreya is too good, of course, but other Indian gurus have learned from his example, and have made use of it to test their own disciples. I know of a case that happened in Girnar. There was a Muslim fakir who had 1,000 disciples. When he was about to die, his disciples all began to pretend to love him a lot. He said to himself, “Is

that so? I'd better teach these buggers a lesson.''

So, the next day he announced, "I have decided to leave this world, but before doing so I have a desire to have sex with a female donkey. Then I'll be ready to die."

Of the 1,000 disciples, 990 said, "Guruji has gone crack," and left him. Only ten remained, thinking it was some sort of joke. The next day the fakir said to them, "Now, please collect the money necessary to buy the donkey." Then those ten realized he was serious, and seven of them left saying, "What can this man know when he is entangled in such worldly desires?''

Three remained, and the next day the fakir said to the three, "By my astrological calculations I have determined a good day. Now, be prepared with the donkey.'' Another departed after this speech, leaving two. After the donkey was brought one of the two boys realized that the old fellow was going to go through with it, and he too got fed up and left. The fakir looked at the sole survivor and said, "What are you waiting for? Better go now.''

The boy said, "Oh no, my Lord, I want to see how you do it with this donkey."

"All right," said the old man. "Bind her legs nicely so that she doesn't kick me." After this was done he said, "Now, lift her tail so that I can have a clear passage."

As soon as the boy touched her tail the donkey turned into a beautiful Shakti, a *yakshini*, who went and sat on the fakir's left thigh. The old man said, "Now, take this Shakti, and she will teach you what you want to know." When the Shakti had passed from the fakir to the boy, the old man died.

There is also the story of the head of a Hindu monastery who was getting old and nearing his end. As usual, many of the sadhus in the monastery were anxious to become *mahant* (abbot) to get their hands on the lands and money that belonged to the monastery. So the old mahant was not sure who should succeed him.

Finally, one day he stood up in the middle of his assembly hall and said, "How many of you would like to become mahant?" When almost all the sadhus there indicated that they would, he turned to his throne and said, "I curse this chair that whoever sits in it will be a pauper and will be eternally ill, but will achieve all the *rddhis* and *siddhis* (supernatural powers)."

Well, suddenly, none of the sadhus were willing to sit on that seat. Only one person in the whole hall, the young boy who swept the floors and who had become a disciple of the old man only a few days before, said, "I will," because he said to himself, "If I need to, I can use the rddhis and siddhis to produce wealth." And when he sat on the

throne he immediately received the old mahant's Shakti, which astounded all the old cronies of the monastery. So, the ways of these Indian gurus are not very straight.

You know, actually even though that disciple who was ready to help his guru have sex with a donkey achieved something, he was still not a really good disciple. If he had been a good disciple, he would have told his teacher, "No, I won't let you go. Stay with me. If you've created one Shakti you can create more. I don't want to possess Shakti, I want to learn how to create Shaktis." But the guru was far cleverer than the disciple. He didn't want the boy to know that he could produce these Shaktis and so he manifested one in the form of a yakshini. Then the boy thought that the guru had merely gained the yakshini instead of having used his own Shakti to produce her.

At least this guru permitted his disciple to pass the test. Once there was a disciple who thought he could do anything his guru could do. So naturally his guru decided to teach him a lesson. One day they were traveling and the guru saw to it that they had nothing to eat all day long. The disciple started to forget the mantra he was supposed to be repeating and began to listen to the rumblings of his stomach instead.

At length they passed a fish seller's stall. The fish seller offered them some fish. The guru took some and swallowed them whole. The disciple did the same, even though he was supposed to be a vegetarian, and because of his hunger began to appreciate their taste. Then the guru calmly vomited up all the fish—alive. He turned to his disciple and said, "Can you do that? If not, you have no right to eat. Get away from me, I have no use for fools like you."

Sometimes when a guru wants to test his disciple he can be very devious. Once there was a guru who had a disciple who had been with him for twelve years. The disciple felt that the guru was not teaching him anything, and the guru felt that the disciple was being taught nicely. One day the guru decided to teach the fellow a good lesson and make him permanently forget about complaining.

In the course of their wanderings the two came to a certain town and camped on the banks of the local river. The guru decided to have a bath before his midday meal and, accordingly, sent his disciple into town to find some food. As the boy was walking about shouting, "*Bhiksham dehi*! *Bhiksham dehi!* Give alms!" he heard a parrot calling, "Come here, Maharaj, come here!" The boy followed the parrot's voice to the place where he was caged and found a nice home. The lady of the house invited him in and insisted he eat while she prepared food for his guru. Now, a sincere disciple will never eat before his guru does, but this one was rather hungry, and he decided that it wouldn't matter much. When he had finished his meal and the lady had packed

the guru's lunch in a box, the disciple started back for the riverbank. Suddenly the parrot called out to him: "So, you are a sadhu!"

"Yes," the disciple replied rather proudly, "I and my Guru Maharaj are enjoying the hospitality of this town today. I am just taking food to my mentor."

"Please ask your Guru Maharaj one question," said the parrot. "When will I be free of this cage?"

"Since you are the reason that we obtained this delicious food," said the disciple, "I will certainly ask him." So saying, he returned to his guru. The guru was served his food and, on inquiring about his disciple's food and learning that he had eaten already, shook his head in a knowing way and finished his meal. Afterward, while enjoying a pleasant smoke from his chillum, he asked his disciple what had happened in the town that morning.

"Well," said the boy, "as I was strolling about, shouting 'Give alms!' I heard a parrot calling, 'Come, Maharaj, come!' and when I went to investigate, the lady there gave me the wonderful food which Your Lordship has just consumed. And, as I was leaving, the parrot called me over and asked me to ask you when he would be free of his cage."

As soon as the guru heard these last words, his eyes rolled back in his head, he gasped for breath, he clutched at his chest, and he toppled over on the ground. The disciple thought to himself, "Now what is happening? Just when I asked that stupid parrot's question my Guru Maharaj collapsed. If I ever want to get any of his knowledge, I'd better try to save him somehow." After several splashes of river water, the guru regained consciousness and continued with his smoke.

Next day, the boy was again sent to town to beg food, and as he passed along that certain lane he again heard the parrot's call: "Come, Maharaj, come!" The disciple entered and collected the food after eating as he had done the previous day, and as he was leaving the parrot asked him, "What did your Guru Maharaj have to say in answer to my question?"

The disciple replied, "You fool! When I asked that idiotic question of yours to my Guru Maharaj he turned pale and fainted, and I thought I would never be able to revive him."

As soon as the parrot heard these words his tail feathers went limp, he paled, and he fell off his perch into the dust at the bottom of the cage with a loud squawk. His mistress, hearing the commotion, rushed outside and with a little shriek opened the cage and took the prostrate parrot into her hands to try to gauge the seriousness of the disorder, whereupon the wily bird flew from her hands onto the branch of a nearby tree. From that perch he said to the bewildered student, "Dunce! You have been with your guru for twelve years and learned

nothing, while it took only one lesson for me."

Puzzled, chagrined, and insulted, the disciple returned to his master, only then wondering how the parrot could have known how long he had been with his guru. After the Guru Maharaj had eaten his dinner, the disciple related the whole story to him while the master was having his smoke. At the end the Guru Maharaj retorted, "Stupid donkey! Don't you understand yet? I have been teaching you for the past twelve years, and you haven't even been aware of my teaching, much less tried to learn anything. And that parrot, who was my disciple in a previous birth, got the idea right away. Do you think that you deserve to be taught anything further?"

That disciple who had become a parrot must have made some mistake to be reborn as a parrot, right? He must have failed some exam his guru had set for him in their previous encounter. The guru had no choice but to locate him and save him, though he took his own sweet time about it, to let the disciple stew and realize the gravity of his failure so that he would not fail again.

That progression is always there. A "child" may truly love his guru, serve him faithfully in so many ways, and generally endear himself to the old man, but when the time for examination comes around, the guru will forget all the "child" has done for him. You may call him ungrateful, or hard-hearted, or whatever, but that will not make any difference to him. He wants to make his disciple firm and for that there can be no wavering. Does a surgeon waver when he operates?

Let us take the simplest possible example so that you will understand what I am trying to get at. Suppose we are sitting quietly together after lunch and I say to you, "Come along, let's go see my Guru Maharaj."

Now, if you say, "No, not today, today I am rather busy with some other work, I will meet him later," what have I learned about you? I learn that you are not too interested in progressing. If you wanted to make progress you would have said, "Yes, come on, get dressed, let my other work go to hell, I want to meet your mentor."

Whatever your answer, I will keep quiet because I will have what I want: the result of my test. Actually, as I said before, there is no such thing as a test. This is a simple measure of the causal body. If there are still too many karmas stored in the causal body, then a "child" will not get the desire to achieve, or will only get that desire off and on, not continuously. In either case, more sadhana is necessary to completely wean the "child" from desire.

Other gurus may work in different ways. Namdev thought that he was quite somebody, because Lord Vishnu in the form of Vitthala ("He Who Stands on the Brick") came in person to eat lunch with him every day. One day, an assembly of all the great saints of Maharashtra took

place. Tukaram, Jnaneshvara and many others were there, and so was Gora Kumbhar, the potter-saint. When everyone was seated, Jnaneshvara's sister Muktabai said, "Gora, why don't you use your stick and test all of us to see if we're well done?" She was referring to the stick which a potter uses to determine whether or not the pots are fully fired. Gora Kumbhar smiled and began to test. He pronounced everyone passed except Namdev, about whom he said, "This one will have to go back into the oven for some time more."

Naturally Namdev was angry, because he had been considering himself God's greatest devotee, and he went to Vitthala to complain. But Vitthala told him, "Namdev, Gora was right, and if you don't believe him, I will also test you. I will come to you before sunset today, and you must recognize me; otherwise, you fail." Namdev agreed.

In the evening, as Namdev was out walking, he saw a *chandala* (scavenger) and his wife, who were really Vitthala and his wife Rukmini in disguise, cooking their evening meal. Namdev was feeling tired and sat down to rest nearby, where he could watch what was going on. The chandala said to his wife, "The pot is not full. Cut up the chickens and put them in." There were twenty-five chickens, representing the twenty five *Tattvas*, or essential principles of the universe. But Namdev did not realize this, and he thought to himself, "Oh, my heavens, how violent! However, it must be God's will."

After some time, the chandala said to his wife, "Still the pot is not full. Cut up the dogs and put them in." There were four dogs—the four Vedas. Namdev should have realized this, but he didn't. Instead he thought, "Well, the chandalas will have to endure the burden of their karmas eventually." What Vishnu was trying to teach Namdev is that when all the Tattvas and the Vedas have been killed, butchered, and cooked, only the absolute, undifferentiated reality remains. That was the last lesson that Namdev had to learn. He had achieved success in worshiping Vitthala, but such worship is limited by duality, and now he would have to go beyond duality. Because of the play of Vishnu, though, he didn't realize any of this at that moment.

Suddenly, the chandala said to his wife, "Still the pot is not full. Now let's cut up that man over there and put him in!" Namdev jumped up and forgot all about God and everything else and, remembering only self-preservation, ran as fast as his legs could carry him. Vitthala wanted to initiate him into the undifferentiated reality, by killing, butchering, and cooking—*sadguru*, *karnaguru*, and *upaguru*.

Have you ever heard of the sadguru, karnaguru, and upaguru? The sadguru kills the aspirant, separating him from his mundane existence. The karnaguru flays the carcass, the ego. All the accretions of untold births, the false personality, is chopped into tiny pieces. When my

Mahapurusha cut Haranath Thakur, my parents' guru, into tiny pieces and removed sattva, rajas, and tamas from the pile of sixty-four, this is what He was doing. The upaguru cooks the ego in the fire of Shakti, and the result is a tasty dish: an enlightened being.

The best guru, of course, combines the sadguru, karnaguru, and upaguru into one, like my Mahapurusha. This is what Vishnu wanted to do for Namdev, but Namdev was still not ready. Namdev stopped running after reaching the nearby village and, seeing a Shiva temple, decided to go there to rest. When he went inside he saw an old man with his feet resting on top of the Shiva Linga. Namdev said to him very sententiously, "Do you know, my good man, that you are defiling the sanctity of this temple?"

The old man looked at him and said, "My son, I am very old and infirm and cannot move my legs. Will you help me so that I can avoid angering Shiva?"

At first Namdev felt revulsion because he would have to dirty himself by taking hold of the old man's feet. But finally he overcame the revulsion, picked up the offending feet, and laid them down a short distance away.

"Nam," said the old man, "I still feel there is something under my feet. Would you just look and see?" The old man called him "Nam." He didn't call him "Namdev" because Namdev literally means "name of God," and the old man was insinuating that Namdev had not yet reached that state but was still only a common name. In fact, being addressed as "Nam" irritated Namdev, but he forgot at that moment there was no way the old man could have possibly known what his name was. It was all part of Vishnu's play.

Again, Namdev unwillingly lifted the old man's legs, and saw another Shiva Linga. When he placed them down again, another Shiva Linga spring up from where the feet touched the ground. Then Namdev realized there was something more to the old man than met the eye. "Nam," he said, "tell me where Lord Shiva isn't, and there I will put my feet." Namdev embraced those feet and took that old man, whose name was Vishoba Khechar, as his guru. Vishoba Khechar taught Namdev that, though he had known one limited aspect of God, he had still to learn of the universality of God.

After Namdev finished his lesson, and Vishoba Khechar sent him back to the assembly, Gora Kumbhar hit him with his stick and said, "Now this one is done, too."

No matter how your guru works, if he is a real guru, he will push you to the limits of your endurance and then further. He will test you until you think you can no longer bear it, but it will be worth it because once he is finished with you, you will be ready for real sadhanas—like Aghora, for instance.

[1] As I am unsure as to when this event occurred I cannot say precisely, but this sum, in 2018 dollars, would be equal to no less than $300,000, and possibly more than $400,000.

[2] He had a certificate from the Archaeological Survey of India that attested to this fact; while it did not mention that he was in samadhi, it did state that “Jatalasadhu Ram Vishwambhardas was found” during an excavation in Orissa.

[3] I met that man on several occasions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AGHORA

When I look at someone, I don't see them as they are now; I see them as they will be. Then I can try to change them if there is something in them I think I can change. If I love skin and bones, how will I be able to help them? Skin and bones will only decay, but the individual will continue to exist even after death. That is why I can say that I love people not for their present value but for their future value; not for what they are but for what they will become, or for what they have the potential to become. This is an aghori's love.

THE TRUE AND THE REAL

I HAVE NEVER BELIEVED IN RELIGION. Religions are all limited because they concentrate only on one aspect of truth. That is why they are always fighting amongst one another, because they all think they are in sole possession of the truth. But I say there is no end to knowledge, so there is no use in trying to confine it to one scripture or one holy book or one experience. This is why I say, when people ask what religion I follow, "I don't believe in *sampradaya* (sect), I believe in *sampradaha* (incineration): Burn down everything that is getting in the way of your perception of truth."

I also often say that I belong to the Vedic religion. But there are problems in that also. For example, the Vedantins. *Vedanta* means "the end of the Veda", and the Vedantins try to distill the essence of the Veda away from the minute rituals. But sometimes they make a mess of it.

For example, the philosophers of Shankaracharya's *Advaita* (absolute nondual) *Vedanta* say, *Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya*, meaning that the Universal Soul or Atman exists and is real, but that the world, the manifested universe, does not. An aghori believes, *Brahma Satyam, Jagat Satyam*: both the Atman and the samsara are real and existent because the samsara manifests itself directly from the

Supreme Soul. If the product is impure and the process is efficient, then must not the raw material be impure? But we know the Atman is pure. If all is part of a harmonious whole, then all must be accepted as real. The world may not be true, no doubt; the world is in fact full of falsehood. But it is real, at least as real as you and I are. And you cannot deny your own reality, because when you do you enter into a logical paradox: If you are unreal then you cannot comment on the reality or lack of it in your existence. This sort of reasoning is all such a waste, a labyrinth of words which does no good to anyone and will not get you to where you want to go: to God.

Advaita Vedanta suggests, in fact, that nothing exists except the individual, that each of us has our own individual realities which are real only for us. That being the case, how can you communicate your experiences? It is impossible. That is why the Vedic religion, which is one of the two eternal religions, gives the same advice to everyone: "Carve out your own niche." There is no such thing as sin; we have invented sin, along with heaven and hell. You must work at your own rate of speed toward your own goal; no one is required to do anything else. You will achieve, after some time. There is nothing to worry about.

The scriptures talk about enlightenment, not because when you are enlightened you are supposed to see some clear white light, but because you have been "lightened" of your heavy burden of karmas and rnanubandhanas thanks to your own penances and to the grace of your guru. And because you have developed the "light" of perception so that you can "see" truth directly, without any interpreters. Vedic religion is the religion of light, the light of lights, the light of the sun, and modem scientists put the lifetime of the sun at about ten billion years. Isn't that almost eternal, as far as you and I are concerned? So, if you are in no hurry, you can afford to wait.

Very few can worship according to the rules of the other eternal religion; Aghora is too rigorous for almost everyone. Is there any limit to darkness? None. In Aghora, you embrace darkness and make it work for you. Does it sound easy? Only the senior most rishis can master both the Veda and Aghora.

The Upanishads have a nice little prayer: "Lead me from untruth into truth; lead me from darkness into light; lead me from mortality into immortality." What is untruth? The world, which is composed of an aggregate of limited forms. Whatever is limited cannot be true. The true is that which is beyond every limit. What is darkness? The darkness of a mind clouded by ignorance. The light is your own inner light, which is your true self. The Veda teaches you to achieve immortality without renouncing the world, but the procedures of its rituals must be rigorously adhered to. We do things differently in

Aghora.

Aghora teaches you to embrace the world, embrace impurity, embrace darkness, and push through forcibly into light. You must catch Shakti by the hair and drag Her to you.

There is no life without Shakti. But everyone is afraid of Shakti: "Beware of Maya, my son" is what our present-day religions teach us. Do they realize that every individual creates his or her own Maya? It has to be this way. Maya is just the projection of your Shakti into the outside world. Because you get yourself entangled in your own Shakti, you scuttle yourself. And that is why everyone fears Maya, simply because they know they can't control Her.

But an aghori never gets entangled in his Maya. He self-identifies himself so perfectly with Shiva that he pulls his Shakti forcibly back to him. Shiva is unborn and undying, and, therefore, permanent. He is also that which is to be known, the permanent reality. The aghori goes from the untruth of limitations to the truth of Shiva; from the mortality of earthly existence, he propitiates the Destroyer and becomes immortal; and by harnessing his Shakti he floods his consciousness with light. Doesn't a lamp give light to all? The oil burns, but the lamp is not consumed. This is the aghori: illuminating everyone with the light of his own incineration, fueled by his Shakti.

Nothing is inauspicious to an aghori. He can do sattvic sadhanas very easily, because he develops obsessive love for his deity. But sattvic people have a hard time with Aghora sadhanas because they find tamas very difficult to control. That is why everyone says "Aghora is extremely dangerous; you may fall and ruin yourself." It's all wrong. If you're naked you possess nothing, which means you have nothing to lose. Let any thief come; what can he take? All other paths to knowledge have traps: Once you learn a little, it goes to your head, and you remain just on the outside of the truth, never making the final renunciation. The ego of knowledge is the worst trap of all. But there is no such danger in Aghora because you throw everything away in the beginning. Then there is no impediment to your perfect enlightenment. There is only one requirement: Your mind must be absolutely firm.

Therein, of course, lies the problem. To maintain a firm mind while a beautiful female spirit dances lasciviously on top of your body is the test of a real man. You have to die while still alive; then you can succeed at Aghora. Then let the ghouls throw live coals onto your flesh and watch your skin char without flinching: You've given up your body as well, you have nothing to lose. So long as you hold onto that determination, you are perfectly safe.

To die while still alive means to relinquish all attachments to your possessions, including especially your body. Everyone can do it to

some extent; an aghori goes all out to do it. Every morning when I wake up the first thing I do is look at my body. I see skin, muscle, and bone, and then I think to myself, "This will go. This will all go and only my consciousness will remain." In this way I inoculate myself against being attached to my own existence.

RESTRICTIONS

If you want to die while you are still alive, you have to restrict the three things which most bind us down to the body: food, sleep, and sex. The Naths have a prescription for spiritual advancement: "Break up your sleep and cut down your food." No matter how far your mind may soar into the astral regions while you are awake, once you go to sleep you erase all the benefit. Sleep is very much like death, just less permanent. It is the overcoming of the mind by a blanket of dullness.

Food makes you sleepy by filling you up; sex exhausts you, it makes you sleepy by draining you. Aghoris cannot afford the luxury of relaxation; they have to be sharp at all times. They work all night long in the smashan, where drowsiness makes them much more susceptible to attack from spirits.

Food and sex also both make you more conscious of your bodily processes. In fact, in the case of all three (food, sleep, and sex) the more you get of them the more you want. Other desires can be eliminated by gratifying them, but these three desires have to be carefully regulated. If you eat an entire chicken today does that mean you won't be hungry tomorrow? No, you'll be hungrier. If you sleep nine hours, you'll likely sleep ten hours tomorrow. And it is the same way with sex: the more you get it, the more you want it. Until you begin to at least curb these desires, you will never make any permanent spiritual progress. Write it down; it is impossible. All your gains will be continuously wiped out by your indulgences. And worse, if you ever permit yourself to be tempted in the smashan, you've had it.

Consider this indulgence: Sadhus and other spiritual aspirants are forbidden to drink alcohol; some are not even allowed to take medicine which contains alcohol. Aghoris, however, drink, but only because they can master the intoxication. You must drink the drink; you must not let the drink drink you, lest you become its slave and be lost. You must always retain your control.

What is the use of drinking and becoming drunk? You slobber all over yourself while you run off at the mouth to whoever will listen, buying them drinks if necessary so they'll listen. Then you gorge yourself on a big meal, and probably vomit it back up. Eventually you get into a fight, make a pass at somebody else's wife, or pass out.

Alcohol makes you extroverted, but this extroversion must be firmly controlled. Most people permit the drink to drink them: They allow their conscious minds to be overcome by all the little yeast cells that were crushed after the fermentation process is completed. Yeast cells undergo such agony during the crushing operations that a great current of tamas is created by their unvoiced screams in the resultant alcohol.

When I want to drink, I always allow a drop of the drink to fall on the ground before I begin, as an offering to Mother Earth. I am asking Her to redeem all the wretched little yeast cells. When She does, each cell becomes filled with the transcendental wisdom and blessing of the Mother, and by my consuming them, I do too! When I offer that drop, I repeat a certain mantra and then say "Prajvalita!" because both the yeast cells and I should have our intellects become *prajvalita* (enkindled). By doing this, the alcohol enkindles my Bhuta Agni and enables me to soar into the astral regions. Anyone else who drinks will enkindle his *Jathara Agni* which will increase his appetite and drag him further and further down into physical consciousness.

Jathara Agni is the fire which digests our food; it is the body's power of digestion. *Bhuta Agni* is the subtle form of fire, and is associated with the subtle body; it enkindles and inflames Jathara Agni. When the mind is disturbed Bhuta Agni is weakened, which weakens Jathara Agni. This results in indigestion, which causes disease.

The Bhuta Agni acts as the digestive fire for the subtle body, except that the subtle body does not live on food; its food is japa. If you want to become spiritual, you must preserve and protect the power of Bhuta Agni so your spiritual practices will be properly digested by your mind. So many Western seekers have ruined themselves physically or mentally by overdoing mantras or pranayama or whatever before they were strong enough to digest, to make proper use of, the energy they were creating. Because the Bhuta Agni gives energy to the Jathara Agni, when one is strong the other must necessarily be weak.

If you want to enjoy mundane life to its fullest you will need a strong, well-nourished body, for which you must keep your Jathara Agni well inflamed. And, the best way to increase the power of your Bhuta Agni, your "spiritual digestion," is to do exactly the opposite: eat less. As your physical hunger decreases you will find an increased mental hunger for knowledge, and, as you find you can only digest smaller quantities of food, you will find that you can digest many more new things mentally, and vice versa. Sleep and sex will generally dull both Jathara Agni and Bhuta Agni. No, there is no escape; to make permanent spiritual progress you must make your Bhuta Agni

predominant.

INTOXICANTS

In an ordinary person, the consumption of alcohol will lead to an enkindling of the Jathara Agni. Ayurveda recognizes this and prescribes medicinal wines when there is a need to increase the appetite and promote digestion.

An aghori, though, is not an ordinary person. Aghoris do not live to eat. An aghori who drinks must drink not to lose his consciousness and become more enmeshed in the world's Maya, but rather to dilate certain brain cells to increase, not decrease, the awareness. Alcohol should sharpen your mind so much that a problem which might take hours to think out in the normal state can be done instantaneously. It's the same with every other type of intoxication as well: if you can't control it, don't do it; you're sure to scuttle yourself.

When an aghori takes a lot of intoxicants he feels like going to the smashan and being alone with his thoughts. He becomes more introverted; he feels like telling everyone he meets "Leave me alone!" And if he covers himself with ashes and remains naked and shouts obscenities, no one is likely to come near, and he can be in his mood all day long. This is one of the reasons why aghoris act the way they do. I used to do it myself.

Aghoris are thrill seekers; that's it in a nutshell. When I went to the USA in 1981, what was the thing I most enjoyed? The roller coasters! Especially "Space Mountain" at Disneyworld and the old wooden roller coaster at Circus World. I could stay on a roller coaster all day! That rush of speed, that excitement and adrenaline! Most people just scream and forget it, just as most people who drink get drunk and pass out, and most people who indulge in sex have an orgasm and go to sleep. But what is the use in that? That is mere bodily indulgence. To be an aghori you must go beyond all limitations, and the biggest limitation is the limitation of the body. When we aghoris use thrills, intoxicants, and sex we use them to go beyond the body. It is the same way with music. Maybe if I use music as an example you'll understand what I mean about intoxicants and sex. Music is vibration, just like mantra. You can use it to benefit your sadhana. Any music will work, if it has a nice melody and a good rhythm. I love Jim Reeves because he has both melody and a good rhythm, and also pathos. I enjoy Spanish and Caribbean tunes, and I will even listen to some rock music, though much of it is too violent for my purposes. Some of our bigoted Indians say, "Only Indian music can make your mind more meditative," but that is all bull. It is true that our Indian rhythms are far more advanced in complexity than are the Western ones, and our

tunes are much more intricate, but there is something about Western music which makes it particularly useful for getting into certain frames of mind.

Meat is also an intoxicant, by the way. It is just as intoxicating as music, alcohol, marijuana, or sex. But it involves killing a sentient being, which I don't like; I am fond of animals. Besides, when you eat meat you must be in a position to ensure that the animal gets a higher rebirth if you don't want to be stained by karma. So it is better to avoid it.

There are three important reasons why aghoris love to take intoxicants. First, it is a question of challenge and response. It is a contest between the aghori and the drug: who is stronger? Will the drug be able to overcome the aghori's will and drown his consciousness or will the aghori be able to control the drug's effect and bend it to his will? The exhilaration of such a duel is a sublime intoxication in itself.

Second, if the aghori is able to master the intoxication, the force of the intoxicant magnifies the force of his concentration, since the mind is a chemical phenomenon. As the concentration is strengthened, the image of the deity which is being continually formed in the subtle body is made firmer and clearer, and this brings success at worship all the closer.

Third, aghoris always worship Shiva, Who loves intoxicants. This has a dual-purpose effect. Not only does the aghori please Shiva by offering Him the intoxicant, but the very act of taking the intoxicant helps the aghori self-identify with Shiva, since permanent intoxication is one facet of Shiva's personality. Shiva is intoxicated with samadhi-consciousness; we must work up to His level gradually.

Most people never realize that the purpose of intoxication is to sharpen the mind. They take marijuana, then eat heavily, then enjoy sex. They will enjoy penetration for one minute and think that they are copulating for years because of the drug's distortion of the sense of time. It's all such a waste.

Aghoris take all sorts of intoxicants, some much worse than these. It is a part of the sadhana. I used to keep a cobra and let him bite me on the tongue every hour, just for that peculiar thrill. To feed him I had to put a small hole in an egg and then forcibly pour the contents down his throat. The idea that cobras drink milk is ridiculous. I had several cobras, including one albino who had three lines on his hood: the symbol of Shiva. I kept a king cobra also. Its poison is much deadlier than that of other cobras because its diet is nothing but other cobras. I used to keep white arsenic also, and lick one of the crystals every hour or two. For my marijuana and hashish, I had a special pipe made from a particular type of clay into which I had mixed arsenic,

aconite, datura seeds, opium, and whatnot. It was a chillum, about a foot long. Beautiful! I used to drink twenty-four hours a day sometimes and would go through cases and cases of Scotch. I drank it neat, straight from the bottle. But after a while I began to think "What is the use?" I have stopped most of my intoxicants, though I sometimes still drink alcohol or use bhang. One of the big disadvantages of intoxicants is their side effects. Smoke chillum after chillum of marijuana or hashish and you are bound to develop a terrible cough, and probably chronic bronchitis. Drink bottle after bottle of whisky and your liver must suffer. Drink bhang and become chronically constipated. And long-term use of arsenic or mercury? Don't even ask about it. But all these substances have their own special advantages, which is why aghoris put up with all the disadvantages.

Most people think tobacco has nothing but disadvantages. They are so wrong. Tobacco is really a marvelous plant. Nowadays it is being misused by everyone because very few know how to use it properly, and that is why there are so many side effects. Poor tobacco is blamed, instead of the stupidity of the user. If it is properly employed, it can work wonders. It has one hundred important uses in Ayurveda. Do you think that the American Indians were fools to worship it? Never! They knew what it could do.

But there are even better intoxicants. The rishis used to take *soma*, which is a type of leafless creeper. Some people today think soma was the mushroom *Amanita muscaria*, but that was also merely a substitute for the real thing. Only the rishis know what the true soma is, because only they can see it. It is invisible to everyone else. Before taking the plant, the rishis would first worship it on an auspicious day and take its permission. If the plant refused its permission it was left alone. If it said "Yes," if it was willing, then they would make sure the plant would take birth as an animal after its demise. Then they would gather it with the appropriate mantras.

If you want to use an intoxicating plant and can't collect it yourself with mantras, you have to add a mantra afterward if you want it to have the proper effect on you, and if you want to avoid the karma involved. Taking an intoxicant without its appropriate mantra is certain to ruin your Bhuta Agni, and your mind.

Sometimes some of my "children" have started using alcohol or marijuana, thinking they could imitate me. But they have all landed in trouble, because without knowing the method you just can't fool around with these things. Even those of my "children" who I allow the occasional use of intoxicants have gone beyond their limits sometimes, and I have had to be strict with them.

One boy I am very fond of started thinking he was a great aghori

because I would permit him to take intoxicants with me. I decided he should be taught a lesson for his own good to prevent him from going overboard before he was able to gain complete control.

Someone had given me some charas, and this boy was anxious to try it out. You know, charas is not the same thing as hashish. Hashish is the pollen and resin of the cannabis plant. Charas is prepared by taking the fresh fleece from a slaughtered sheep, stuffing it full of this resin, and burying it in the ground for a month. The fat from the sheep and the lanolin from the fleece mix with the resin and liquify it, and the liquid drips into a little pot. After a month the pot is removed, and there you have charas.

I prepared this charas for the boy personally, mixing it with tobacco and rubbing it with my hand in a little water, and I warned him; "Don't inhale too hard. This sort of charas gets a firm grip on your head very easily. I know you've taken plenty of intoxicants in your life, but this one is different. Beware!" But he ignored my advice, as I knew he would, and he and I started puffing away.

Within five minutes—only five—he realized he had taken too much; but it was too late. He began to lose all his body consciousness. His prana collected in his throat, which prevented him from wagging his tongue. He was game for it, though, I must admit. He started to try to make the prana go up to the *Ajna Chakra* (the energy center between the eyebrows) and then out through the *Sahasrara* (the energy center at the crown of the head)—gone for good! Had he succeeded he would have gone into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, a state in which he would have been permanently unable to self-identify with his body.

But I could not permit that to happen. After all, he still has plenty of rnanubandhanas to clear off yet, and if I prevent him from doing that, I become responsible for clearing them off myself. No thank you. So I told someone to give him some water. Drinking that glass of water kept his prana right there in his throat, unable to go up any farther. The charas was of course still pushing from below. Now he was in the *Trishanku* state: unable either to go up or to come down. He was neither in the world nor out of it; he lay suspended between the world—the lower five chakras—and the true *shunya* (state of "spiritual vacuum") of the Ajna Chakra. So that he would not forget his lesson, I permitted him to remain like that for several hours, while I went to the stables to see my race horses. When I got back there he was, still hovering somewhere in between. When he was finally able to talk again, I asked him what he had experienced. He told me, "I felt as if I was on the threshold of forgetting everything; as if just a little farther and it would have been only Thee and Me, and from there onward only Thee—or maybe only Me."

“Wait, wait,” I told him laughing, “there is still time. Don’t be in a hurry. To go up fast is fine, but to come down too fast is fatal.” And since that day he has always taken his intoxicants according to his capacity without permitting them to overcome his conscious mind, even by shunya. You must work very gradually with this intoxication business; Rome wasn’t built in a day, you know.

Now, obviously, when I prepared that charas for him, I added a mantra to it. Otherwise do you think the charas would have sent him into shunya? If that were so, all the charas addicts in the world should be enlightened by now.

One thing I always make sure to do is to take the antidote for whatever intoxicant I use. Ayurveda, our ancient Indian medical science, has provided us with methods to limit or eliminate the side effects on the body which these intoxicants cause, so that you get only the intoxication and none of the evil repercussions on your body, or almost none anyway.

Even with all these precautions, however, your body will deteriorate when you take intoxicants, because your mind becomes partially free of the constraints of the body; that is the whole purpose of becoming intoxicated. Your mind works so fast that your body can’t keep up with it, and it becomes flaccid, loose. The less the mind self-identifies with the body, the better for your sadhana, but the worse for your body; your physical health will give way to improved mental health. Or, at the very least, you will remain healthy but you will lose weight and fitness, because you are sitting all day long without exercise or food. But then you don’t care two hoots for your body because you find your mental play much more satisfactory.

Of course, it is very good to possess a body when you take intoxicants; it acts as something like a sheet anchor when you want to retain your awareness. When you are ethereal, you have nothing to hold onto, and other ethereal beings can play havoc with you if they catch you unaware; the possibilities are really frightening. But when you become really firm in your subtle body there is nothing to fear.

Until then, though, you need to have a strong, healthy body to withstand everything you will be going through. Don’t get me wrong —I was a wrestler myself, and I appreciate the benefits of a good physique. And this is another reason I discourage people from taking intoxicants: You have to be very healthy first and have done a lot of physical and mental cultivation before you can afford to get involved in this intoxicant business. Otherwise you’ll just make yourself toxic. And remember, the brain is a chemical matter, and each toxin produces a certain state of mind. So, if you are not intrinsically healthy, the intoxicant will not only not make your mind soar into the astral regions but it will create new brain toxins, which will

overwhelm your mind with disturbing emotions, which will ruin your sadhana. So it is usually better to leave such things alone.

Aghoris believe in reducing sleep to the absolute minimum, because during sleep there is a possibility the mind may slip out of your control. All your careful precautions during waking will come to naught if you get caught up in a dream. Either you must suppress sleep absolutely or you must learn to control your dreams. There exists a plant for this purpose. Make a paste of it and apply it nightly to the soles of your feet. If you do it for thirty nights, or even forty nights, every night you'll get the same dream. It is a type of intoxication; the toxins from the plant are affecting the same brains cells each time in the same way. This process is necessary for the sadhana of *Svapneshvari* (Goddess of Dreams). Once you get siddhi of Svapneshvari you can control your dreams or stop dreaming altogether. You can also control the dreams of other people, which can be very useful.

Once, one of my friends had taken Aghori Baba's stick for some work. When I asked him for it, he refused to return it. I sent Svapneshvari to him. When she comes to someone, she comes in a dream; her face can't be seen. She warned him to return the stick or face the consequences; he ignored the warning. This was repeated three or four nights in a row. Then Svapneshvari came to him and told him, "This is your last warning. If you don't return it, you're heading for big trouble." When he woke up in the morning, he found a handprint in blood on his pillow. He obstinately refused to return the stick even then. The next night, Svapneshvari came to him and said, "Now you have gone too far; take your punishment." The next morning, he and everyone in his household woke up with high fevers, which would not go down; no medicine could cure them. He returned the stick, and then the fevers subsided.

There are plenty of other uses of Svapneshvari, but any way you look at it, wakefulness is better than sleep. Intoxicants can be extremely useful in sadhanas, or they can ruin your consciousness. It all depends on how you use them, and to use them correctly you must first die.

TO DIE WHILE STILL ALIVE

To die while still alive means to eliminate all involuntary stimulation of your senses. You cannot salivate when you see a nice roast. Do dead men feel hunger? You cannot become aroused, even mentally, when a stunning woman walks by. Can a dead man get an erection? And remember, once you get involved in this, there is no limit to the amount of testing which will be performed on you. You

will be tested to your limit.

To die while still alive means you must melt your bones. Why are some spirits depicted as skeletons? Because when the body dies and decomposes, the bones still remain for them to self-identify with. To melt your bones means to lose the ability to perform any action with your own individual will as opposed to the cosmic or divine will of Nature.

Do you remember the story of Sagal Shah? The aghori who was brought to Sagal Shah's home had to be carried in a basket; he had so thoroughly given up action on his own that he was, in effect, boneless.

They say that three creatures have no bones: the earthworm, the madman, and the God-intoxicated man. To be an aghori you must become just like an earthworm, completely boneless, so that you can be tied in knots and still not suffer. When a cyclone comes through, trees are uprooted, but the grass bends down and escapes.

To die while still alive means to dry up, to become desiccated. Dry herbs are usually more useful than are fresh ones; they gain in potency as they dry. It is the same with an aghori. He or she dries up and loses all the juices which are necessary to maintain life. Physically it means your digestive juices dry up, your reproductive fluids diminish, your skin may even become harder and wrinkled, especially if you live in a smashan for months at a time.

But the mental effects are more important. Remember, the entire world is a smashan for an aghori. Everyone is born with their death fixed, which means to an aghori that they are all dead already; they are all already skeletons. The juices which must be dried up are all the juicy thoughts which keep you bound down to the world by perpetually producing desires. If you can dry these up mentally, physically you can do whatever you please; if you can't, you will have to observe some preliminary discipline and restrictions. Only when these juices of desire have dried up can the real juice of life—the *amrta* (nectar of immortality)—be obtained.

To die while still alive means to extinguish all thought of dualities. The Universal Soul is single, not dual, so you must eliminate all perceptions of duality: desirable and undesirable, pleasant and painful, interesting and boring, and so on. Does a corpse care about anything? No, not a thing—and you must become a corpse, in the eyes of the world, if you want to succeed at Aghora.

THE LEFT-HAND PATH

Why do they call Aghora the Left-Hand Path? Look at the difference between the right and left hands, at least in Indian culture. The right hand takes the food and drink to the mouth, performs

religious ceremonies, makes offerings, and does everything else auspicious. The left hand must perform all the inauspicious activities: cleaning the excretory orifices, even killing animals. And almost all the people in the world are naturally right-handed. Aghora is the mastery of all actions, inauspicious as well as auspicious. Left is always more intense than right, because the left side of the body is controlled by Shakti. This is why a man's wife must sit at his left side when they perform rituals together. Left-handed people are really good in their chosen fields, especially music.

An aghori forgets the meaning of "inauspicious." Orthodox people think that corpses, skulls, and menstrual blood are filthy, and that anyone who would use them for worship is insane or worse. The very thought of eating human flesh nauseates them. But an aghori finds these things extremely useful to him.

To become an aghori is to accept everything in the universe as part of the Atman, but you don't just jump to that stage directly, because you could never cope with it without a satisfactory preparatory period. You must do things stepwise, just as a child does his schooling. You don't ask the child to take an examination in algebra on the day he learns addition, and in Aghora you always start with the basics and work up very slowly, unless, as in my case, you start at the top. But this is exceedingly rare.

An aghori is awarded his diploma only after he becomes fearless. What should he fear? Not only spirits, ghouls, and what not, but the entire working of the samsara. Do you have any idea how many murders occur every minute on the face of the globe? How many rapes, how many robberies, lootings, tortures, and other heinous crimes? How many times each second people are cheated, misled, duped, and made fools of? When you try to put it all into perspective it's too much; it will frighten you, when you think of the tremendous load of karmas. Once you have jnana, and you know the consequences of each action, you will be so scared of karma you will think a thousand times before doing anything at all; so deep will be your fear.

But you must go beyond this fear and realize that it is all part of the whole, all moving according to Nature's sublime plan. Every murder, every cruelty has its significance. You must love everything taking place in the samsara. That doesn't mean you should go out and murder, but you will realize that even murder is just part of the play of the Three Gunas, all due to the Law of Karma, and therefore a part of Nature.

A good test for an aghori is this: When you can eat your own feces with real love for it, you have achieved a tiny bit. I don't mean perversion; I am talking about true oneness with all existence. You have produced the feces; it is a part of you; you enjoyed eating the

food which produced it, and the only thing between the food and the feces is you. Why should you find it so repugnant? Feces is just as much a part of the Atman as your body and your consciousness are; who is feeding what to whom? The Atman is feeding the Atman to the Atman; it is all the play of the Atman. When an aghori reaches this stage, he eats whatever he finds: dead dogs, offal, slops from the gutter, his own flesh. He finds whatever he eats equivalent to the tastiest dishes, all because he does not discriminate. He sees everything as One; no attraction or repulsion. When the body demands food, he eats whatever is available.

Aghoris eat human flesh, but not because they have become cannibals. There is a ritual involved. I have eaten human flesh many times; even my son has eaten human flesh. I used to wait at a funeral pyre until the skull would burst—it bursts with a fine "pop"—and then I would rapidly, to avoid burning my fingers, pull out parts of the brain, which would be a gooey mass, partially roasted by then, and would eat it. It was nauseating, but at that moment you must forget your nausea and everything else. This is sadhana, not dinner at the Ritz. There was an aghori in Girnar named Sevadas who specialized in eating human brain. But after some time he left it, and became absolutely sattvic, the sweetest, softest possible sadhu. That is the true test of an aghori: from full-blown tamas he must graduate to pure sattva, love for all.

When you see One in All and All in One, there can be no fear; fear of what—of yourself? "Everywhere I see, everything is Me": a little saying I once thought up. "Me" is capital "I," the Atman, which conveys the whole sense of the experience. If a Zen Buddhist heard it, I think he would experience satori. Can you fear yourself? No, you fear only the unknown; once anything is known, the fear drops away. Once you know yourself to be part and parcel of the Atman, what is there to fear?

The worst fear of all is the fear of death; once you go beyond the fear of death, you go beyond all fears because you go beyond expectation and anticipation, which are the causes of most karmas: "I must experience this enjoyment before I die," or, "I must prevent that person from interfering with my enjoyments." When death has no value for you, time loses its value, and then you don't bother about anything. Then you say, "If I am meant to experience this enjoyment, I will experience it; why bother about it?"

Once you drop fear, the whole world is open to you, because you have nothing to take from anyone; you know only how to give because you have nothing to hold on to. What can you possess when "everything is You"? You already possess everything; it is really a superb feeling.

From your high school diploma, you go on to the first two years of college: temptation. All sorts of temptations will come your way: spirits offering you fame or riches, ghouls offering to slaughter or maim your enemies, yakshinis offering you sexual favors, any possible whim you might want fulfilled. If you take any of them up on their offers, you are finished. There is only one way to avoid it: refuse. If you are truly certain that you are part of the Universal Soul then how can they give you anything or do anything for you? You are being taken care of by Nature, you need not bother to accept any of these baits.

The college degree is awarded in Aghora only after the next examination: attack. When the hordes of ethereal beings find they can't tempt you, they will try to drive you mad with their power of fright. But don't bother; how can they harm you? You are part of the totality of existence, and your Mother is looking after you; what more do you want?

After your graduation, you are awarded your degree: clairaudience and clairvoyance. Then you go anywhere, eat anything, and you are carefree, because something is directing your every move. You become just like a yantra. The cosmic Shakti plays through you, and you enjoy the bliss. But this is the final stage. You must start at the bottom and go through the grind.

I hope you can understand by now that it takes a special temperament to become an aghori; not everyone will be able to do it. And doing it is just part of it; getting out of what you are doing is even more difficult than doing it in the first place. Suppose you get involved in strenuous penances with the use of intoxicants. You can't just quit them once you feel you've had enough because your body won't be able to take it. You will have to reduce them gradually. So many aghoris forget why they have been taking the intoxicants, and even after years of sadhana they may become simple addicts, unable to give them up, ruining their consciousness in the bargain.

I used to use all day long, twenty-four hours; you know the reason I quit? Because I realized that the greatest intoxicant there is exists within me at all times. It is free, easy to use, harmless, and never gives me a hangover: it is the name of God. It gives the best concentration of mind. The effects of alcohol or marijuana or whatever will wear off by the next day, but the intoxication caused by God's name just goes on increasing; there is no end to it. I use it all the time, and it always works for me. No matter what has been my problem the holy name of God has always been my solution. This is true Aghora. Forget all the externals; only when your heart melts and is consumed in the flames of your desire for your Beloved will you ever come close to qualifying to learn the true Aghora.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AVISHKARA

One of my friends once asked me, "Is there ever one moment of the day when you are not doing avishkara?" What could I tell him? Does he know the wonderful joy of avishkara? He can't imagine it because he does not really know how to love.

AVISHKARA

WHEN I SAY THAT SPIRITS CAN BE HELPFUL, I am sure you cannot imagine all the ramifications of such a statement. Let me explain it in this way. Why do we Hindus worship stone or metal or wooden images of our deities? We are not worshiping the image; we are requesting the deity to come in His or Her ethereal form and take possession of the image, on which we then concentrate our worship. We treat the image as a living being, because a ritual called *prana pratishtha* is performed on it in which prana is actually transmitted into the image.

You don't just take any image and try to add prana to it. The first thing you must do when you want to perform a Prana Pratishtha is *bhuta shuddhi*. That is, you must clear out all the filthy, troublesome spirits. I don't say "evil" spirits because no spirit is really evil. But some are so miserable they will try to harm you without any reason just as a mad dog bites whoever crosses its path. After Bhuta Shuddhi is done, then *bhu shuddhi*, purification of the ground where the image is to be located, is indicated. Only when everything is purified should the Prana Pratishtha be performed. However, it will take years and years for a stone image to respond to you, because even after prana is added, the deity must be called repeatedly, and only if the worship is continuous for some time will He or She become fixed there. True, if an image has been worshiped before by a Siddha or a Mahapurusha or some other high-ranking immortal being, you will get all the benefit of that previous worship, but where will you locate such an image?

To avoid this problem, you can worship mentally with your subtle body. By long worship your subtle body will actually take the form of the deity you are worshiping, and you can achieve. This is much better because there are no external images to be broken or defiled; there is only your inner self which is impervious to all exterior pollution.

So, you can worship an image which has been made to live, or you can use your subtle body, which is already living. And there is a third way also, which I am sure you have never even imagined. The deity can enter into someone's body, and you can worship Him or Her in that way. Your sadhana is very easily accomplished; the deity is pleased, and the person into whose body the deity enters plays with his Beloved and is purified in the bargain. Besides deities, you can call the spirit of some saint or fakir, who can do many mundane works for you. Isn't this useful? We call this *avishkara* in Sanskrit, and *baithak* or *hazri* in Hindi or Urdu.

It is handy if the body into which the deity or spirit enters is well prepared for it through long sadhanas, but it is certainly not essential. In Brindavan, the *Rasa Lila*, the story of Krishna's dalliance with the milkmaids, is performed by many troupes of players. Krishna is played by the most beautiful ten- or twelve-year-old boy who can be found. Daily he self-identifies with Krishna. If you were to worship him ritually as if he were Krishna, before long he would start to get Krishna within his body, and then you would be worshiping Krishna directly. Unfortunately, no one ever thinks of doing this; they are all too busy worshiping stones. And besides, these troupes have to play for big merchants in order to survive. While the play is going on, the merchant worships the boy as if he were Krishna; after the performance is over, he goes to the manager of the troupe and says, "Take this money and give me the boy who played Krishna. I want to fire his ass." How can such a thought enter anyone's mind?

You don't even need a human for avishkara. On the day when Ganesha is to be worshiped, I go to the zoo and feed the elephants with my own hand. I give them the things they like, especially sugarcane. By reciting a certain mantra, I cause Ganesha to enter the body of the elephant, and by worshiping the elephant I worship Ganesha. Isn't this better than worshiping a rock? Not only will Ganesha be pleased, the elephant will appreciate being fed and will bless me himself in his own way. I am doubly fortunate. Roshni learned to do this from me. She even climbs the fence to get inside the elephant pens to feed them if necessary!

If you want to do avishkara yourself, you have to create a spiritual vacuum within; otherwise how will the other personality be able to come in and take control? You must "get lost" in order to get the

result, because the spirit or the deity can enter you only if you are empty. The superpowers are busy creating political vacuums that they can fill; you must do the same thing on the spiritual level.

Next, you must self-identify with the spirit or deity who is being called. In the beginning, when you do avishkara, you must put on all the outer garments and accessories characteristic of the desired personality. If your imagination is not strong, these props are necessary. For instance, when someone I know wants to do avishkara of Kalaji Rathod, one of the Rajput generals, he dresses just like a Hindu prince of 400 years ago and carries a cavalry saber. He wears a Rajput-style turban and offers everyone present opium diluted in water, the warrior's favorite drink. This is the lowest form of avishkara. The intermediate stage is when you can self-identify mentally, directly, with no thought for the physical details. If you are really sensitive, the right music should be sufficient to induce avishkara. The ultimate is to be so attuned that the spirit or deity comes at the merest thought.[1]

At first you have no control over who comes or when; they come and go as they please. As you get better at it, you request certain ones to enter you at certain times. When you are really expert, the ethereal beings themselves will beg you to permit them to enter, because they love to play about. That's the beauty of it. Finally, you enter the state in which there is no need of even the formality of avishkara: the spirits and deities are always with you, coming in and going out as required.

During the avishkara the subject has no idea of his earthly existence. Afterward, his body feels terrible because avishkara is a tremendous strain on the nerves, but he doesn't care. If he does avishkara of a deity, he is in a state of total bliss; no iota of ego separates him from his beloved deity. After the avishkara is over, he feels blank, empty for several hours, until the old personality becomes firmly fixed in the body again. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa loved to go into *mahabhava samadhi*, which I call "emotional highlights", and play about with the Divine Mother Bhavatarini, but at the end of his life his disciples actually prevented him from doing so as much as they could to save his body. He never cared for his body, though.

You can't afford to care for your body if you really want to do a good avishkara. When the avishkara is going on, the subject's body can do and endure things it would never be able to do otherwise. There is a certain fellow many of my "children" know. We call him Das Bapa. When he does avishkara of Mahakali he slashes his arms, neck, and tongue, and blood pours from the wounds, but he doesn't feel a thing, until afterward. Even then there is no problem, because the wounds close automatically and heal quickly. When Anjaneya

enters him, he can drink a bucket full of mustard oil with a pound of oxide of mercury stirred into it, and nothing will happen to him. *That* is the power of Anjaneya.

Once some townspeople tried to test Das Bapa. They told him they were going to build a bonfire into which he would have to jump. If Anjaneya really entered his body, he would remain unburned, and only then would everyone believe his claims. The fire was built and as soon as Anjaneya entered him, Das Bapa jumped directly into the flames and stayed in there about an hour. And who got burned? The people who forced him to jump in and stood there to watch. They got their demonstration, all right.

When this Das Bapa does avishkara of a certain spirit named Bhima Bapa, his body is tied in a shroud, just like a corpse. When the avishkara begins the body jumps into the air, despite the fact that the arms and legs are tied. This particular spirit likes tobacco and smokes fifteen bidis at a time, in a big bunch. Once a fellow watching this demonstration tried to be funny and challenged Bhima Bapa to do some of the work immediately. The spirit said, “OK, if you think I can’t do anything, try to get up from where you are sitting.” He couldn’t.

Three or four people were unable to lift him. After some time, the spirit told this fellow, “Well, now we are all going to leave. If you are interested, why don’t you come along with us?” Tears came into the man’s eyes, and he was finally allowed to get up. But this was a good sign that Bhima Bapa was able to do work. You must always test these things thoroughly. If you are requesting a deity to come, you must make sure that it is really a deity which has come and not a tiny spirit of a lower order who may masquerade as a deity and fool you.

Take the example of Das Bapa again. When he wanted to do avishkara of Gorakh Nath, he had to dress up just like a Nath: black handkerchief, ash on the forehead, strings wound round the waist, jingle bells on his feet, and a fire tongs with bells on it. He smoked quite a lot of ganja and then started to shout, “Aa-o, aa-o, aa-lek, aa-lek,” just as a Nath would, waving the fire tongs over his head and bashing himself with it over his shoulders, neck, and head. All this was necessary for him to self-identify with Gorakh Nath sufficiently to permit Gorakh to enter him.

During the avishkara he had to cross a water channel in the floor of the cave in which we were seated. Some people got up to help him over it, thinking that he might trip, but I told them to sit down. If Gorakh was there, he would never lose his footing—he is a Nath, after all—but if there was only a spirit there he would have a nice fall. In this case, Gorakh was there, but only for a few minutes. Then a little spirit came and started playing about. I knew about it because I knew

the signs. For instance, he gave his fire tongs to someone else to shake while he was talking. Would Gorakh ever give his fire tongs to a human being? Never! Then he was talking about himself (Das Bapa); would Gorakh Nath ever bother about anyone so mediocre? And there were some subtle changes in the eyes also. Besides, he was answering so many questions wrong. Gorakh could never be wrong.

I love to do avishkara, because I get an opportunity to play with my beloved deities: Anjaneya, Ma, Gorakh Nath. But I never bother about the external formalities; I don't believe in using crutches when you can walk on your own two feet. Still, if there is music I appreciate it, and incense is essential since deities "eat" through the sense of smell. The music can be any thing appropriate; for Anjaneya I prefer devotional chantings, but for Ma there is a song from a certain Hindi film which always sends me into an avishkara unless I am careful. It is dangerous to go into avishkara when you're driving down the road at top speed listening to the radio.

Unfortunately, I can't do avishkara of deities too frequently because it is too great a strain on the nerves, and it makes me want to leave this miserable existence and get on to greater things; do you think this is the only place I have to play in? But I want to finish up certain projects before I die, so I have to restrict my avishkara. Instead, I often do avishkara of sadhus or fakirs long since dead. It's interesting, and less strenuous.

Suppose I want to do avishkara of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Now, Akbar must already have taken birth in so many wombs and probably is embodied even now. What will happen is that when I call for the spirit of Akbar, the body in which he now resides will lose consciousness. Without a personality to self-identify with how can it express itself? So long as the avishkara goes on, that body will be inert. As soon as Akbar leaves me he will return to the other body, which will awaken without any knowledge of what has happened. Akbar in his present condition may not know he was once Akbar; that's not necessary. But all the old records are still stored in the causal body, and that's what I'm interested in. So I don't bother about Akbar's present personality; it has its own job to do.

I'm very fond of Kinaram Aghori; he's so sweet and gentle, the ideal aghori. But for mundane benefits, Muslim spirits are always better. Muslims live for emotion, and they are always more playful after death. Hindus, on the contrary, become steadier and, if they want to make you rich, they will take their time about it so you will be able to digest your new riches before going overboard. But if a Muslim decides to make you rich, he says, "At least once I'll make you exuberant like I am, no matter what the consequences may be." I don't have to request them for their exuberance; it is natural to them. I

often do avishkara of Nizamuddin Aulia from Delhi, and also of Abdul Qadir Gilani, one of the most famous Sufi saints of Iraq. But I guess my favorite is Akbar; there must be some rnanubandhana there somewhere.

When I do avishkara of Akbar, I always wear a turban. I tie it myself; none of these modem pre-tied turbans for me, thank you. I don't require the turban for my concentration, to be sure, but Akbar was Emperor of India, and if I want to play about with him, I need to respect him in that way. So I offer him what one actually offers a Mughal emperor. Those who come to witness the avishkara must also behave as if they are actually in the presence of Shahanshah Mohammed Jalal-ud-din Akbar, Jahanpanah, Alamparah, Khudavan, Mere Dil-e-subahni, Mahabali.

Pretend you had come to visit me, and we decided to have an avishkara. Once Akbar came, you would first know it by my eyes: They change color slightly and become fixed, staring directly ahead into yours. So long as Akbar is within my body they will never blink. Also, my foot will begin to shake so long as Akbar is there. Then you must play your part. Imagine yourself as a courtier in the hall of audience of His Majesty. How would you act? Reverently. You must, because insolence in front of a king is equivalent to inviting death to approach you. Remember, my body is still present, but I, Vimalananda, am not; I have gone elsewhere, to play about in another way. Your work is with Akbar, so you forget my body and concentrate on him.

First, bend low to salute him. If he is pleased, he will offer you his hand; kiss it. Then, to please him all the more, apply attar to his hand. Hina attar is the best; all Muslims love hina. When you speak to him, use Urdu if at all possible; it was his court language. I also love to speak in Urdu, but you'll notice that when Akbar is within me, my vocabulary and style of speech change drastically. He was an emperor, after all, and emperors are always fond of flowery speech.

They are also fond of flattery, if it is not too obsequious, so when the Emperor asks you to admire his turban, describe its beauty to him in glowing terms. Offer him a cigarette if you like. Hookahs were in vogue at that time, but he has no choice if he wants to play about in today's world, does he? Hookahs are outdated according to so-called modem people. Akbar loved wine, so you can offer him drinks also. His wine was much different than is ours, much sweeter and tastier, but if you offer it with respect, he'll accept it.

Offer him music. Don't make the mistake of expecting him to appreciate modem music; it is just so much noise to him. Offer him classical Hindustani music, especially Raga Darbari or Raga Miyan ki Malhar. These two ragas were specially composed just for Akbar by

his court musician, the famous Tansen. If you can't sing or play an instrument yourself, a recording will do just as well.

Once he is feeling intoxicated from the attar, the tobacco, the alcohol, and the music, he will begin to talk about any subject which seems fit to him. Keep quiet and listen to him, speaking when he expects you to. Don't be argumentative; it will just sour his mood and he won't be willing to do any work for you. Roshni used to wrangle with him, and for so long he would never come when she was around. Can an emperor permit any insubordination? Never!

He may speak about anything; he may even tell jokes. Here's a sample: Do you know the main difference between the days of the Mughals and these days? Back then, before you started on a journey, you would take your horse or elephant aside and permit it to remove the liquid element from its bladder. Today, before you start you must take your "mount" (motor vehicle) and put the liquid element into its bladder. Whether you think his jokes are funny or not—though they usually are—you must laugh a little, to be polite.

When he is finally satisfied and feeling expansive, he will ask you what you want. Don't hesitate; he is an emperor, and emperors know only how to give. They are famous for giving, because it builds up their reputation. Does anyone dare to give a better present than the Emperor? So be bold. Tell him what you want, preferably material, from life. You can ask him about the spiritual also, because he became very spiritual in his later days, but he is better with the mundane, because he was Shahanshah, the King of Kings, and Jahanpanah, the Refuge of the World.

There is no need for me to speak; dozens of people have attended Akbar's avishkaras, and they have had their work done. All sorts of work: passing exams, getting new jobs, removing thorns in the office, finding a runaway child, curing diseases, anything. He will ask each person present in the room what he or she desires and will spend time with each discussing it before he moves on to the next, just as if he were still seated on his throne, dispensing favors. That is why he is valuable—because he was installed on the throne. It is the throne that gives him his authority. *Takht ki tasir* is the Hindi phrase: the authority or power of the throne itself. Even his son Salim, who got away with murder otherwise, had to tremble once in his august presence. So long as you play along with the situation, your work will be done along with everyone else's.

Finally, when everyone has been attended to and all problems have been dealt with, he will ask again two or three times, "Is there anyone left to ask anything?" When no one replies, then he'll say, "Now I'm going to return to Sikandra," which is where his tomb is located, and he may also say something like, "When I was alive, I had

authority over the whole of India, but now I am reduced to an ethereal form; all my worldly authority has disappeared. That is the way it always is with the world; seek that which is beyond the world." Then you should salute him in the Mughal way: head bent low from the neck, palm raised to the lips. He will then return to his mausoleum.

Each personality has his or her own peculiarity, of course; you don't treat Ganesha the same way you would Akbar. You have to be clever enough to know how to satisfy each personality and what sort of work to take from each. Asking Smashan Tara about money is useless, but she might be willing to cure disease. It takes experience to know all about it, but some of my "children" have sufficient experience to get all their work done this way. I'm very happy, since it's that much less for me to do.

Someone once asked me, "Why should these people who lived so long ago bother to come back and play with you? What do they get out of it?" I can't tell you what they get out of it, but they must get something; otherwise they wouldn't do it. Here in the world, no one does anything without some self-interest, not even spirits. But then that's between them and me.

The best kind of avishkara is the one in which no one has any idea of what is going on. Once I decided to teach a lesson to a friend of mine who refused to believe in such things. I never told him what I intended to do; I just suggested that there was no limit to the power of the human mind. When he challenged me to prove the truth of my statement, I told him I would perform a keratoplasty operation with my own hands. He was an eye surgeon, and he knew I had never been trained in surgery, though I had qualified in Ayurveda.

He thought I was just gasbagging, so I outlined the operation in detail. He was taken aback but, to test me, he took a tray of instruments and asked me to pick out the trephine I would use. When I immediately selected the right instrument he was impressed, and he agreed to permit me to perform the operation. A suitable patient was located, and I operated a few days later. It was all over in a matter of minutes, and the patient recovered much sooner than expected. My poor friend could never understand how it might be possible.

It was not me, of course, doing the operation; it was an expert surgeon. I had been able to locate one, and he was willing to perform the surgery using my body in return for a certain favor which I was happy to do for him. A fair exchange is no robbery.

Maybe the ultimate in this sort of thing is to cause avishkara in someone else, without either that individual or those around him having any suspicion that something is unusual. I recall a very sad case which fortunately turned out happily. There was an Australian

lady who had come to India with her small son in hopes of procuring enlightenment from one of the local "holy" men in Poona. She and the boy, who must have been five or six, had been reduced to living in a small hut in a smashan, of all places, because she had donated all her money to her guru and there had been nothing left to live on.

A smashan is a fine place for an aghori, his home in fact, but it is no place for the unwary, like this tiny Western tot. He developed typhoid and, after it seemed he might recover, suddenly he turned up with all the signs and symptoms of acute peritonitis. One of the typhoid ulcers in his intestine must have perforated.

The mother went to her guru for help, but she might as well have approached a stone for all the good it did her. One of the disciples told her, "We can't help it if your child is sick. All humans have to die sometime; be prepared." A fine attitude from a guru! None of her fellow foreigners were inclined to help her; the only person who was in the least interested in her plight was Dr. Lad, the chief medical officer in the hospital into which her son was admitted. He provided the boy free medicines and donated a pint of his own blood for the operation. But the surgeon who was to operate was convinced of the likelihood of failure and was leaning in favor of canceling the operation.

Dr. Lad, who has known me for some time, came to me and explained the entire situation. I sat and smoked over it for a short while, when suddenly I heard the tinkling of bells outside: an elephant! The sight of an elephant is always auspicious, or so we Indians believe, and I rushed outside and fed it some apples, the only fruit we had handy. "Well," I said to myself, "this is a good sign! It seems that what I have planned will succeed!" And I turned to Dr. Lad and told him, "Go and tell your surgeon to operate without any fear; the child will pull through."

I had to return to Bombay that day, so it was only the next day that I learned over the telephone the outcome of the operation. First, it had been almost bloodless; there had been no need of administering any blood. Second, well, let the surgeon speak for himself: "Until now my hands always used to shake when I would operate," he told Dr. Lad after emerging from the operating theater, "but I don't know what happened this time. It seemed to me as if something had taken over my hands, that they had a life of their own, and they moved so quickly and accurately that I was myself surprised."

"Not only that," he continued, "but as soon as I opened the abdomen the intestine leapt out at me, and it was child's play to repair it. I have never operated like this before; I just can't understand it, but I think God must have been helping me." He can never know what was helping him; but why should he bother about it? The little boy

made an uneventful recovery, and after he was strong enough his mother's sister sent them plane tickets from Australia and they returned there. I am sorry to say, however, that after leaving her son in the care of her sister, the lady came right back to India and resumed her place at the feet of her guru. I don't care for her at all. If she is so heartless and cruel as to expose her son to such dangers in the first place, then desert him, and run back to her playmates, she is no mother. But I am glad the little boy could be saved; Mahakala always likes to avoid taking children. And I was happy to see the honor of India preserved. Supposing he had died here; forever afterward the mother, her relatives, and their friends would have cursed India for killing him, forgetting their own complicity in it. So, everyone's work was done, and no one was stained by karma.

I have never hesitated to do anything when I thought someone could be helped by it. A good illustration of the use of a long-term avishkara comes from my own family.

I have never scolded my children. I've always tried to understand their problems and sympathize with them. When my son said he wanted to marry a certain girl, I said, "Go ahead." When he told me that he wanted 50,000 rupees[2] to celebrate the wedding on a grand scale, he didn't bother to ask whether I had that kind of money or not. Anyway, I got it from somewhere and gave it to him. A few days later I was sitting early in the morning, as is my habit, checking on what was going on with the people I love, when I saw my mother dying. My visions have a habit of proving true unless something is done about them. The first thing I did was call my son and tell him to get married as soon as possible; otherwise, according to the customs of our community, he would have to wait a year. I don't bother about such things, but all my relatives would. I told him not to bother about the lavish ceremony but just to go to the marriage registry and tie the knot without further delay.

While we were busy with that procedure a message came: My mother had suffered a severe heart attack, massive. All the doctors, including my brother-in-law, advised us to put her into intensive cardiac care immediately, but they, with my son who is also a physician, were of the opinion that she was going.

How compassionate she was! In the ambulance on the way to the hospital she told me, "I hope I don't die. Not because I'm afraid of death, but my poor daughter-in-law will be blamed for it. All the gossips in our family will say, 'Ha, look what sort of luck she has brought us! On the day of her marriage her mother-in-law passed away.'"

Isn't it unusual, at least nowadays, for a person to be more concerned about someone else's welfare rather than their own when

they are so near death?

Kuputro'bhijayate kvacidapi, kumata na bhavati: A bad son is sometimes born, but there is no such thing as a bad mother. Unfortunately, Shankaracharya, the author, was wrong when he composed that line. In Kali Yuga most physical mothers are bad mothers, especially in the West. Here at least we still have strong family ties, but in America when the child comes of age, the parents tell him, "Now go out and take care of yourself. We are finished supporting you." How could any child not become bad with parents like that?

And in the case of boys like my Robby who have gone astray but have good parents, it is only because of the loving kindness and forgiveness of the parents that they have been saved at critical moments. Had it not been for parental teachings protecting the mind from complete degradation, where would such prodigal children end up?

A good mother can make all the difference in a person's life. Motherly love is the finest, highest form of love. Our Vedas say that the mother is the first guru. The Muslims say that paradise lies at the feet of the mother. A bad mother, though, is the gate to hell. Why? What sort of mother will tell her child, "Get out, earn money, enjoy your life, and forget about everything else," if not one who is uninterested in the child's ultimate fate? This is not motherhood, it is mere rnanubandhana. Very rarely do you find a saint who had a bad mother, and he or she could become a saint only by guru's grace. Today a real mother, *sumata*, is very rare, so the lack of love in the world is not surprising. Motherhood is inherent in a woman's body, but it must become conscious for the emotion to manifest itself. There is a big difference in physical and emotional motherhood. I have been lucky in so many ways, but I was really lucky in having a mother such as I had. She was a *jnani*, a woman of true knowledge. She was worshiped by half a million people as a goddess. She never claimed to be a goddess, of course, but people treated her that way. She had ashrams in Secunderabad and in twenty-two other cities. But besides that, what a wonderful woman she was! When she was dying she was fingering her rosary, repeating her mantra, in spite of being in great pain. The day she died, she fixed food for my father. They lived together for sixty-seven years, and during that time he never took any food not prepared by her hand.

Just as she was dying, my father was sobbing. She asked him to come over to where she was lying and told him, "What are you doing? Haven't you always told me that suffering is only elimination of karmas? So, what is there to cry about? You should be happy instead." Imagine, remembering that at the moment of death, when most

people can't remember anything.

My mother always had good advice for me. Once I was feeling low because a friend had let me down quite badly. I went to see my mother and told her, "Give me some paan." I always loved to take paan from her hands.

She said to me, "Why are you so miserable?"

I told her, "Please put down your rosary for a few minutes and listen to what I have to say. Once a man found a little doll in the street. It was very dirty and broken in several places. He took it home and washed and mended it, put nice clothes on it, and kept it with him. He and the doll enjoyed each other's company for several years. But one day the doll found some other man and ran away, and now the first man, the one who retrieved and took care of the doll, is very sad."

My mother just smiled at me and said, "That man should realize that a doll from the street belongs to the street; it is not possible to change its nature. That man should forget all about external dolls. Instead, he should seek and play with the little doll that is here in everyone's heart, because that doll will never fail him or be untrue to him so long as he lives. Other dolls will break or run away, but this one is always there." How beautifully she put it! She was right. There are two words to describe the world: wretched and thankless. That's all there is to it.

Anyway, at the hospital, the doctors were telling me she couldn't last long. I lost my temper. Fortunately, a friend was with me, and he cooperated; everyone else was busy otherwise. I made him go down and buy me a bottle of whisky. I broke the bottle open at the neck by smashing it against a table and drank it down neat. Then my mind became a little clearer.

Suddenly, I started hearing music. I realized when I went over to the window that it was a *qawwali* (a form of Sufi devotional music) sung by Shankar and Shambhu. "Ohhh," I said to myself, "now there is nothing to worry about." I located my friend and told him to drive me to the smashan. My elder sister looked at me strangely and said, "But we'll all be going there within a few hours after Mummy dies. Why should you go there now?" "You keep quiet," I told her, "I'm going."

When I got to the smashan, I told my friend to drive off, but he suggested I might need the car later on, so he slept in the car while I did my work. It was the burning ground at Banganga, where all the members of my family, including my son Ranu, have been cremated. After I was finished, and I knew my work would be done, I woke up my friend and we went home. When I got there my foster daughter, Roshni, inquired as to my whereabouts: "Don't you know Ma must be

dead by now? Twice, people have called from the hospital to get in touch with you, but you were out somewhere."

I told her, "Don't be ridiculous, Ma is perfectly fine." After a cup of tea and a brief rest, we went to the hospital. There was my mother, sitting up, talking with everyone. The oscilloscope on which her heartbeats were being displayed showed perfectly normal. The first thing she told me was, "What is this thing in my arm?" She meant the pacemaker they had implanted the day before. "Take it out immediately." She was OK, so they removed it. "Now, I'm hungry. Give me tea and biscuits." They gave her tea and biscuits, and they even allowed her to go home. Can you believe it? One day on the threshold of death; the next day fit as a fiddle.

There was one small problem: She had been in the habit of speaking Gujarati all throughout her life, and now suddenly she was speaking in Hindi and Urdu, which she had never known fluently before. What you can understand from this, assuming your mind is subtle enough, is that my mother was no longer in her body. She had died at the time appointed by Mahakala, and someone else had been forcibly placed inside. That someone else, who happened to be a male, a spirit of a very high caliber, was made to self-identify with her so perfectly that she continued to live.

When we reached our house, my father came to the door and greeted her in Gujarati. She replied in Hindi. He asked her in Gujarati, "Vimu"—that was his pet name for her—"Vimu, when have you started speaking Hindi?" She replied to him in Hindi, "I know Hindi perfectly. Why shouldn't I speak it?" I took her, or rather, him, aside and said, "Look, talk in Gujarati if you don't want to cause a big brouhaha."

After that, she was absolutely fine for four to five months. My son had his glittering reception; everyone was happy. Only my elder sister, who has always been a troublemaker, tried to ruin things by insisting that a pacemaker be implanted in my mother's chest. "To forestall any further deterioration" was the explanation or some stupidity like that. When she is fine, why torture her with an operation? But they operated, and she died on the table. The surgeon was saying, "Oh, please don't die, it'll be a stigma for me." He began to massage the heart. Fortunately, I was there. I rushed into the operating theater and gave the heart a good solid blow from my fist, and it started beating again. This was not a medical procedure, really; it was a way to remind my friend to do his work properly.

Many of my friends met my mother during this period, and they were most amazed at the conversations she would have with them. She would discuss how metals are formed deep down within the earth or how the conditions are on other planets, things she couldn't

possibly have known. Of course, she wasn't talking, don't forget that.

Finally, the spirit that was within her came to me one day and said, "Now look, enough is enough. I've done your work for you; what is your idea? You think you can make me stay here permanently?" Strictly speaking I could have, but it would have ruined our friendship, so I agreed. I selected a good day for my mother's death: the day on which Kapila Muni gave jnana to his mother. As the auspicious moment approached, the spirit left the body of mother and my mother returned to her body. She had been kept in a safe place during those months, reviewing her life, removing all delusions. That is why, when she was gasping out her last few breaths, she could remember the name of her guru, Haranath Thakur, and repeat it: "Hara, Hara, Hara." Now, as I've told you before, Hara is one of the names of Mahakala. How many people have ever died with the name of the Destroyer on their lips? Too few to mention. So I think she was very lucky.

Interestingly enough, when we took her for cremation the next day, she was looking rosy, absolutely healthy, and rigor mortis had not set in. My son, who is a doctor, became bewildered about the whole thing and asked me, "Papa, is she really dead?" I told him, "Yes, this time she's really dead." And we burned her. I had warned her long before she would have to suffer at the time of death; that's just the way things were written in her destiny. But as her son I felt my duty to my mother was to help her with all means available to ensure a higher rebirth, and, God willing, I think it may succeed. If she has given me good teachings, I must pay her back adequately.

Very few aghoris are really terrible. Most are soft as foam, because they know all about suffering. Take Kinaram Aghori, for instance. He used to live on Assi Ghat in Benaras, and his sect of aghoris can still be found there. People used to say about him, "What Rama can't do, Kinaram can do," so he must have been quite something.

Once there was a dancer in the court of the King of Benaras. One day, when she stretched her leg up higher than usual, everyone noticed a white patch on her thigh. At that time leprosy was the disease most feared by all, so she was immediately driven from the palace. She had decided to drown herself in the Ganga when Kinaram came across her and heard her sad story. He told her, "Go to my well in the middle of the night every night for seven nights. Bathe, then change your clothes, and throw the old ones away." She did so, and by the sixth night she was completely cured and was in fact much better than she had been before: more beautiful, more talented, and healthier. Kinaram invited everyone in Benaras for a dance program.

He was himself very fond of music and played the sitar. When the girl danced at this program, everyone was enraptured by her

performance and wanted to know who she was. The king was especially interested. Kinaram told the king, “Don’t you know who she is? You should. Look closely; she is the dancer you threw out of your palace.” And Kinaram got the two of them married also. That was Kinaram: unique.

Don’t be deluded by the ease with which Kinaram cured the girl. He knew exactly the burden of her karma he would have to bear, and he was willing to bear it. You can get your self into a lot of trouble if you perform penances, develop good spiritual powers, and then use them without any regard for the consequences.

You have to be just like a snail walking on a razor blade if you want to do Aghora sadhanas. Any other beast than the snail would be cut, but the snail moves very slowly and never deviates from its path. If it ever veers, well, that’s it for the snail. If you want an example, here’s a story:

Once upon a time there was a guru who was traveling about with one of his disciples. Having reached a certain town, the guru stopped beneath a shady tree and sent his disciple to beg the day’s dinner.

As the boy cried, “Give alms! Give alms!” here and there, he was invited into the house of a certain lady, who prepared food and served it to him. The boy said, “I can’t eat food before my Guru Maharaj does.” But the woman replied, “Don’t worry about it. I am packing his lunch, and as soon as you have finished yours, it will be ready for you to take to him.” The boy gobbled down a delicious dinner and then said, “Well, I am satisfied. Now, is there anything I can do for you?”

“There is just one little thing that you might do for me,” said the woman.”

Speak it and it shall be done,” said the boy.

“I have no child to rear and love. Give me a child.”

“*Saubhagyavati bhava*! Have a child! Your wish is granted.”

Having dispensed this royal favor, the disciple picked up his guru’s lunch and set out to deliver it. When he arrived, his guru asked him about his adventures in town. The boy said, “Oh Maharaj, a beautiful lady called to me and provided us food. I ate my portion there and have brought the rest for you.”

“All right,” said the guru, “and although you forgot that you are to eat after I do, it’s all right, I forgive you. What else happened?”

“The lady, after giving me my food, asked one little boon, which I granted. She wanted a child.”

“Mm-hmm!” said the guru, “So you have developed the siddhi of having all that you say come true, I suppose. Did you grant her this on the strength of your own power?”

“No, no, of course not, Maharaj. I guaranteed it on the strength of

your power, so that she could know what a great guru you are," said the boy, who was really more interested in his own fame than in anything else.

"Well, well, well," said the guru, who had understood the boy's intentions, "you leave me no choice. Someone has to be found to go into that woman's womb. You will die and be reborn as her son."

And that is the way it happened. Watch out! Don't fool around with things you can't handle. The boy in this story was a fool. He couldn't spot a dangerous situation and avoid it. Of course, there are times when, even if you see the danger coming, you can't avoid it and you shouldn't try, because you have to endure some privations because of your past karmas. Listen to the story of Shams-i-Tabrizi.

Shams-i-Tabrizi ("Sun of Tabriz") was a fakir who received that name because of his great spiritual power. He became known in Tabriz as a man who could work miracles, and naturally he developed some enemies who were jealous of his position. To test him, the chief religious magistrate called him one day and said, "We hear that you are able to do many impossible things. Will you please bring this man back to life?" pointing to a nearby corpse, that of the king's only son.

Shams agreed to do so and asked the boy to rise in the name of Allah. He requested him thus twice or thrice, and then he got wild and shouted, "All right, then, in my name, get up!" The boy was restored to life.

Naturally everyone thought Shams would be rewarded for bringing the king's son back to life, but the magistrate said, "No, because he has raised the boy in his own name, he is an infidel and must be skinned alive."

Shams had to raise the boy in his own name because it was his own Shakti that was doing the job. He was skinned alive, but as they did it, he remarked, "It doesn't matter. Do they think they are injuring me when they torture this body?"

Now there was a good reason that Shams had to be skinned alive. Years before, when he had been wandering about near what is now Abbottabad in Pakistan, he had become intoxicated with his own power. When he came to a certain river one day, he was hungry and said to the fish in the river, "Get up here!" and they jumped out onto the bank. Then he looked up to the sun and said, "Shams, cook these!" and the sun cooked the fish for him. But he didn't bother about the other creatures and plants in the area, which were roasted by the sun. Later in his life he had to pay for exceeding his limits. Even today, Abbottabad is the hottest place in Asia.

Most sadhus become proud of their achievements, and that makes them miserly; they aren't willing to use the fruits of their austerities to help out anyone else. But then what is the use in doing the austerities

at all if you mean to use them only for yourself? You will get the results, no doubt, but that is all. Compassionate love, which God's devotees have, you will never get, because for that you must forget all penances, all karmas, everything except your beloved. And that intoxication of love is worth all the penances you can do in your lifetime.

One day King Janaka was taken to heaven by a messenger of the gods. While there, he asked to see hell, which he had not seen before. A demon was summoned, and Janaka was taken to hell.

When they arrived Janaka was surprised to see that everyone there was happy and smiling, but the demon was even more surprised, because everyone in hell is supposed to be in agony, miserable. When the demon asked for an explanation, one of the inhabitants of hell replied, "When we look at him (Janaka), we feel that he is bearing our karmas for us, so that soon all our evil karmas will be finished, and we will also be able to go to heaven."

The demon was stunned and asked Janaka to return to heaven. The spirits of the dead said, "No, don't go, please stay with us." Janaka said to the demon, "No, I don't want to go. I would rather stay here, for tens of millions of years if necessary, until all these people are freed from their bondages."

When Vishnu heard this, he was amazed and said to Himself, "Even though I am the Preserver of the worlds, still I haven't done as this man has." Then Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva performed *abhisheka* (anointing) on Janaka and blessed him, and one of the results of the blessing was the birth of Sita (Rama's wife). This is the way a real aghori feels. Because he has endured so much suffering himself, he knows how miserable other people are, who don't have the spiritual advantages he has and, because of his compassion, he tries to help them face their problems fearlessly whether or not he does anything else concrete to relieve their sufferings. To overcome fear is a great thing, because Maya is not really dangerous; She has no teeth. She tries to scare everyone, and usually She succeeds. But if you refuse to be scared then She has no power over you.

An aghori always seems a little ghoulish to the ordinary observer, but inside he is never ghoulish; he is simply acting according to his inherent nature, without hindering it in any way. Besides, since his friends and colleagues are spirits and other ethereal beings, shouldn't he seem ghoulish?

The whole idea of Tantra and Aghora is transmutation. Whether you make use of the Shaktis of spirits or deities or magical plants or whatever, transmutation is the goal. That is why some tantrikas practice alchemy and learn to transmute one metal into another, in preparation for transforming themselves.

Aghoris don't bother about such piffles. If they want gold, they'll piss on a rock and it will become gold. Tantra is limited by time, space, and causation, but Aghora is beyond all triads, all dualities, beyond all limitations. Tantra is just the preliminary finger exercises a musician performs to train his hands; Aghora is the full flowering of the musical talent.

For example, remember Telang Swami. By the force of his austerities he had developed the ability to transmute his own excreta into purified substances. That is why he could worship in the temple with his own urine and feces. When the Veda calls for water from the Ganga there is no alternative but to go to the Ganga and get the water. Telang Swami did not need to bother; he could create Ganga water within himself at any time.

Telang Swami was the pride of Benaras. He was originally a Brahmin from Kanyakubja and was devoted to his mother, who always despaired of her son's queer behavior. She finally decided he should get married and located a good girl for him. He told his mother, "Why do you want me to bother with all these worldly formalities? Anyway, the girl is destined to die." The wedding took place—and the bride died before the honeymoon could even begin. When his mother finally died, Telang Swami sat for twelve years right there in the smashan in which she was cremated. Eventually a Brahmin guru came to him from Telengana (in what is now the state of Andhra Pradesh), which is why he came to be called Telang Swami. After meeting his guru, Telang Swami spent another twenty-five years sitting in the smashan, twenty-five years sitting inside a blazing fire, fifty years on the bottom of the River Ganga at Benaras, and finally about a century on the shore of the Ganga in Benaras, observing absolute silence.

He made it a habit to worship at the temple of Annapurna (the goddess of food), using his urine and feces as offerings. You know what happened the day he decided to do it at Kashi Vishveshvara. After the king's dream of Shiva, the king sought out Telang Swami and asked to be taught something. Telang Swami agreed to come out with the king in his boat and as they floated down the river, Telang Swami sat quietly listening until the king started to talk something out of his wits about what belonged to him.

Suddenly Telang Swami grabbed the king's sword and threw it into the river. The king was flabbergasted and asked, "What have you done? That was my symbol of authority, and besides, it was an old family heirloom, priceless."

Telang Swami reached into the river and pulled out two swords, one exactly like the other, and said to the king, "Pick out your sword." Then the king understood that he could not even recognize that which

he claimed as his own. Wasn't that a good way to teach?

Telang Swami was a Siddha, after all. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa met him; Ramakrishna's disciple Vivekananda met him both before going to America and also after returning. Even after Vivekananda's death, Telang Swami went right on living. That's how I was able to meet him.

Finally, he did decide to take samadhi. His devotees nailed his body into a coffin and cast the coffin into the Triveni Sangam, the meeting of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati Rivers at Allahabad. As soon as the coffin entered the water, someone looked up and saw Telang Swami standing unconcernedly on the opposite bank of the river. Then he disappeared, and no one has seen him since.

Yes, Telang Swami knew how to transmute; if he didn't, who would? How else could he have dared to worship Shiva with his own excreta? I remember another story about him. One day he was standing naked, minding his own business, when some English official came by and was scandalized by the sight of this nude behemoth of a holy man and ordered him to be brought to his office for questioning.

Back then, when the English were ruling our country, they enjoyed ridiculing our customs and sporting with us because we couldn't fight back. This official decided to have some fun with Telang Swami in the privacy of his office and said to him, "Will you eat what I eat?" Telang Swami did not bother to speak, but merely nodded his head in the affirmative.

The official then uncovered a plate of roast beef and offered it to Telang Swami. Now you know that Hindus never eat beef; some would fly into a murderous rage if they were even offered beef. But Telang Swami did not bat an eyelid. He ate the beef and then he said to the official, "Now, will you eat what I eat?" When the official agreed, Telang Swami shat on the salver on which the beef had been served and covered it with the lid.

The Englishman flew into a frenzy—forgetting he was just being offered a taste of his own medicine—and shouted, "I'll have you thrown in jail!" He turned to call a guard. As he turned around again Telang Swami told him, "Look a little more closely at that salver." And when he did, he saw there was not any shit on it at all; instead, he saw a well-roasted chicken, dripping with gravy and ready to eat.

The Englishman was quite naturally astonished and became the greatest devotee of Telang Swami. I just mention this story to give you some idea of how an aghori can transmute. Telang Swami once pulled this trick in court also: he shat, and transformed his feces into roses. He was too good.

Why Telang Swami? I can give you an example from my own life. One day I wanted to drive from Bombay to Poona but I had no money,

and there was no petrol (gasoline) in my car; at that time I had a Humber Super Snipe. A naked aghori by the name of Mangalgiriji happened to be with me and when I explained my problem to him, he said, “What, you are worried about such a trifle? Don’t worry!” Then he stuck his penis into the petrol tank and pissed into it. I was aghast: I thought the engine would be ruined. When I told him so, he replied, “Don’t be silly, let’s go!” We got inside, and when I pressed the starter the car started! We drove all the way to Poona and back, almost 300 miles, without ever adding a drop of petrol. Hard to believe, isn’t it? I would never have believed it had it not happened to me.

All these external transmutations are mere trinkets, of course; it is the internal transmutation which is important. And that is where avishkara is important; the more you bring your deity into your body, the more He or She will transform you from a limited personality, the one you possess now, into an unlimited personality, the personality of the deity you are worshiping, and, ultimately, into the Absolute Personality, His personality, with a capital ‘H’.

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[1] “Kalaji Rathod” once came to visit Vimalananda in Bombay when I was there, and I was present at one of his avishkaras, which I found impressive. A friend from Gujarat then visited “Kalaji Rathod” in the mid-90s and was also impressed; by then his human “host” had become someone younger than the man I had met. This same friend went to “Kalaji Rathod” again about twenty years later and discovered (as is often the case) that increased notoriety had been seriously detrimental to the well-being of the “host” and had significantly decreased the power of the avishkara.

[2] About $12,500 in 2018 US dollars

CHAPTER NINE

SEX

I have always maintained that there are two parts of the body which move even though they have no bone to support them: the tongue and the penis (or clitoris). These organs are made to move by the ego alone. They can take you to the heights of success if they are controlled, and if they are misused—if you make just a single mistake in your sadhana —down you go, divebombing like a Stuka.

MAN AND WOMAN

I AM AFRAID THAT NOWADAYS MOST PEOPLE don't understand the natural differences between the sexes as well as they should. This is why there is so much misunderstanding between men and women, and why men have become so passive and women so aggressive.

Ultimately, no doubt, there is no such thing as gender. In fact, I always had the desire to fill a room full of skeletons. One would be lying atop another as if copulating; one would be holding a skull as if contemplating it, and so on. When anyone came to me to ask about spiritual knowledge I would show them this room. Then I would say, "Do you see those two skeletons over there? That is what you look like when you are making love. There is no gender! Gender was created by Nature for Her own purposes. Copulation is due to rnanubandhana, the bondage of karmic debt."

So long as we exist in the world we are enmeshed in duality. For worldly purposes we are obliged to consider gender. Until you can go beyond your body completely your gender will exert its effect on you. So I don't think there is any use in trying to avoid gender differences or pretending they don't exist. You have to know a thing before you can go beyond it.

Men are creatures of ambition, and women are creatures of emotion. Yes, women can have ambition, and yes, men can have

emotion. But only a woman can be overwhelmed by emotion, which is why she can succeed at achieving emotional ecstasies fairly easily. A man must encounter plenty of obstacles before he can enter emotional highlights. He has to work hard to develop such extreme emotion. Of course, men are better than women on the path of jnana, or knowledge. Rarely can a woman develop good jnana. Why? Because she is the very embodiment of Shakti.

Now I know you can argue that men are also the embodiment of Shakti because the entire manifested universe is nothing but Shakti. But then the entire universe is all the creation of Shiva as well. Both men and women possess attributes of both Shiva and Shakti, but in different measure. The chief characteristic of Shakti is that She is kinetic, She moves. And this is the chief characteristic of a woman, that she is changeable. Some call her fickle. Shiva's chief characteristic is His immobility. Likewise, a man is, or should be, firm. Often, he is unyielding. Women have to learn firmness; men have to learn emotion. The universe cannot exist if either the male or female principle ceases to exist. There is no way to determine whether men are greater or women are greater. Both of them are, that's all.

Once the Adya Shakti said to Lord Shiva, "Ha! Who do you think you are? Without me you are nothing!" Shiva smiled his deep, secret smile and said in reply, "Be calm, my dear. Remember, I gave you birth. Your very existence is due to me."

Consider something else. Women are meant to be more closely bound to the world than are men. Only women can give birth. What is birth? It is the process of taking a spirit and enmeshing it in physical existence. A woman's job is to clothe spirit in matter. This is why in Vedic times women traditionally were supposed to look after the home and the mundane side of existence while their men went out and did rituals and provided for the family's spiritual advancement. The man never had to worry about providing for his physical necessities, so he would be free to spiritualize himself to the maximum. The woman never had to worry about tough penances and other spiritual practices because whatever penance her man did automatically came in some measure to her. Now things have changed. It is hard for a woman to find a good man, I don't deny it, and if she can't find a good man, then she has to try to do sadhana on her own; it's only reasonable. But it is not the ideal situation.

Even physically we can find evidence of this truth. Consider the vagina, a hollow organ. Hollow means empty. A woman has a very basic emptiness which she is always trying to fill, and which can best be filled by a man. A man has a solid, firm penis which is always on the lookout for emptiness which can be filled. The vagina is an expansile organ; it can change size to fit any penis. The penis does not

change size to fit the vagina, remember; it is the vagina that makes the adjustment and clutches the penis tightly. Just as the proton is enveloped by the cloud of electrons which whirl about it, just as Shiva is encompassed by Shakti, even so is a man surrounded by his woman, physically and mentally.

This fact makes women more superficial than men. I know that this statement will offend many self-professed feminists. But look at the vagina again. Is it not superficial to the penis? Does it not cover, as its function? Is not the penis central, the thing covered? Shiva is impulse, Shakti is that which limits the impulse. Is not the limit superficial to the thing limited?

There is nothing wrong per se with being superficial. It has its benefits and drawbacks, like everything else in the universe. If Shakti was not superficial, then Maya, Shakti's skin, would not exist, and the universe could not hold together. And then none of us would exist. Which is why I worship Ma. But it is necessary to call a spade a spade.

Our Vedic religion made a thorough study of this whole business of male-female duality. Remember, the Vedas never discriminated against women; the prejudice came much later. Many of our great sages were women, like Lopamudra and Gargi. All of our rishis were married householders. As I said before, in an ideal Vedic marriage the husband exists to provide stability and direction while the wife sees to the details. In music the rhythm (Shiva) provides the stability, and the tune (Shakti) provides the ornamentation. It is a partnership, a mutual thing: You can't have one without the other.

Our scriptures describe in detail the qualities of a good wife. When her husband is troubled or tired or fed up with life or needs advice, she is friend, companion, and advisor. In his work she shoulders part of his load, as a servant would; she shares his karmas with him. When she feeds him and cares for him when he is ill, a wife must mother her husband. And finally, *Shayaneshu Rambha*—in bed she should be as passionate as Rambha, the most sensuous of the dancing girls in Indra's court. In fact, she has the right to demand that her husband satisfy her sexually.

Most important, a good wife will always encourage her man to do his sadhana, since he is doing it for her also; they have become two parts of the same being. Never forget that sadhana is possible only when your domestic life is stable. As the great saint Tukaram said, *Pahile pothoba, nantar vithoba*, meaning that you should first make sure that your belly has been satisfied and only then think about going out to search for God.

If a man and a woman can cooperate like this, then the sky is the limit for what they can achieve together. I once told this to an American couple whom I treat as my spiritual children. The lady told

me, “This is all about a good wife. Didn’t anyone in India ever bother to consider what makes a good husband?” She was right, of course; she had every right to demand to know. I told her, “A good husband does all he can to satisfy his wife’s desires, beginning with sex. He must not fail to satiate her with sex. Our ancient scriptures even mention this.” In one of them, Parvati, Shiva’s wife, says, “Among all the pleasures of women the greatest pleasure is to unite with a good man in private, and the misery which arises from its interruption is not equaled by any other.” A man’s enjoyment in sex and in family life in general is meant to consist of the satisfaction he obtains from being able to satisfy his family’s desires. If his woman is a good wife all her desires will benefit him directly or indirectly anyway, so he is not losing anything. It is a mutual benefit, an attempt on the part of both to do the best they can for each other.

Of course, nowadays such well-balanced couples are so rare as to be almost nonexistent, and this is all because men and women no longer know who they are and what they are supposed to do. Every woman has within her a measure of the original Shakti but very few women know their own capabilities, all because of the heavy overlay of karmas that obscures their perception. A woman who learns her capabilities as an embodied Shakti, well, she becomes someone. And this goes for men, too. Deep down inside they have a spark of the divine Shiva. Unfortunately most humans perceive things so dimly that women interpret the Shakti they feel as a need to smother their men, and men feel just sufficient force of Shiva to make them think they need to dominate women without knowing how to control them. Control of a woman can never be by force, which produces too many deleterious effects. Control must always be by love alone if it is to be effective. How many men know how to control a woman today? Even a handful? Ha!

Remember, always remember, that, just because Nature wants men to control women, no one should ever think that women are in any way inferior to men. Never! They are just different, and it is not enough for a man to say to himself, “Men are supposed to control women,” and then proceed to beat his wife, physically or mentally, if she refuses to indulge his whimsicality. Women are different from men emotionally, and they have their own advantages which men cannot claim. For example, once a woman decides to do something and sets her mind to it, no force can dissuade her. Once an object is electrified the electricity never leaves on its own; it must be drawn away.

This explains why women are more passionate than men: They abandon themselves to their passion, they lose themselves in it.

This is why I am never bothered when I find a spiritual aspirant who is obsessed with sex. It is a good sign. Once you can transfer that

obsession to a deity it will always pay dividends. After all, sex is just a misdirected attempt to return to the state of primordial unity. Once such aspirants are given the proper direction, they can achieve very quickly, in a blitzkrieg.

I have told you stories about Tulsidas. Did you know that sex made him renounce the world? It happened this way. When he was a young man he married a young beauty named Ratnavali, and he went mad with lust for her. He couldn't sleep at night unless he had slaked his lust with her at least once. She enjoyed this in the beginning, of course, but eventually she became tired of it and one day decided to take a break. She told him that she had to consider her obligations to her family and so needed to make a social call on her mother and sister for a day and a night. She left.

That night Tulsidas found himself unable to sleep without his usual sexual release. It did not take him long to become frantic with desire, and in the course of the night he determined that he must have Ratnavali or he would surely die.

The night was dark. Rain cascaded down onto the insatiable Tulsidas as he careened through the town's muddied streets. Ratnavali's family lived across the river from Tulsidas, and the swollen torrent of the stream temporarily stopped his progress as he feverishly considered ways to cross over.

It so happened that a corpse lay there on the riverbank waiting to be cremated. The rain had set in before its pyre could be built, and the mourners had had to run to shelter to await a drier moment to perform their duty to the deceased. Tulsidas's desperate brain saw the corpse as a suitable raft on which to cross the river, failing to register that it was indeed a dead body. Overjoyed at his good fortune, Tulsidas dragged his "raft" into the water and began wildly paddling for the opposite shore.

Once on the bank, he leapt ashore and flew toward Ratnavali's house. It was lightless with midnight. Knowing Ratnavali's room to be on the top floor, he grabbed a handy rope, knotted one end into a lasso, and looped it over an obliging tree branch entirely oblivious to the fact that the rope was not a rope but rather a large, very venomous, and thoroughly astonished snake.

Into Ratnavali's room Tulsidas catapulted. Embracing her out of her sleep he had his way with her over her shame-filled protests that her mother and sister would hear. Spent, he lay back exhausted, soaking her bed.

She spat at him disgustedly, "Tulsidas, you came to me only to satisfy your lust. You crave my flesh and bones. If you had put as much emotion into worshiping Lord Rama as you have in longing for this impermanent body of mine, just think of what heights you could

have reached by now."

This barb embedded itself deeply in poor Tulsidas. All his sweet intoxication of passion and satiation evaporated instantly, and he replied, "Oh, is that so? Well, I'll show you!" He left, noting in passing the corpse and the snake, amazed at the blindness that sex had engendered in him. He left his home and wandered the world as a sadhu. He searched and searched and eventually found Rama.

And Ratnavali? She was as good as a widow after that. She helped her husband attain God and ruined her marriage in the bargain. She did not meet Tulsidas for several years. Once she finally located him, he told her, "You are my first guru. I must always respect you for pushing me onto the path that led to Rama. But now I have greater happiness with my Rama than I had with you. So please go back to your mother and sister."

Here is a wonderful example of a lost opportunity. If Ratnavali had had subtle intelligence, she would have converted her husband's sexual energy into love for God by always seeing him as Shiva and always imagining herself to be Parvati. She would still have been his guru, fulfilling that rnanubandhana, and he would still have achieved, perhaps after a longer time, but then both would have achieved, and what love they would have had for each other! But by being insulting she lost everything. That's why I always say that the tongue and the penis can lift you to the heights or drag you down to the depths. It all depends on how you use them.

THE NATURE OF SEX

Why do people enjoy sex so much? It's such a filthy activity, putting flesh into flesh, lying in a pool of sweat, oozings, and discharges. Modern people explain it by saying this is the way Nature ensures the survival of the species, but that is not an explanation. It is merely a restatement of the problem: How does Nature overcome individuals with the desire to mate?

Consider this: The ultimate foundation of all interpersonal relationships is cuddling and fondling. When a child is born its parents cuddle and fondle it, creating in it the feeling that it is loved. When the child is older it develops an attachment for a member of the opposite sex, which progresses from cuddling to fondling and culminates in the sex act.

After marriage some of the mystique of the romance between the two partners disappears. The solution? Produce a child which the couple can cuddle and fondle. Once the child is grown and married the couple will have their grandchildren to cuddle and fondle. All throughout life there is nothing but this.

When a man and a woman love each other, they always try to get closer and closer to one another. Separation is always painful, and they try to avoid it by spending all their free time together. This is why the word “couple” is singular in English even though it means two. This feeling of separation is possible only because there is duality; the misery of separation is the misery of being unable to make the two, which were originally one, into one again. In the primal condition there was no male and no female.

When a man and a woman are really deeply in love, when the emotion is so strong that they are always mentally close, daydreaming about each other, imagining the next rendezvous, there comes a time when they can no longer resist the urge to be physically close, to unite sexually. The tension builds up to the point where release is inevitable. It is a question of possession: “I want to become you, and I want you to become me.” This is impossible; the bodies get in the way. The next best thing is, “I should be in you and you should be in me.” When the couple is overwhelmed by the imperative to unite, they have sex. Only the penis and vagina actually unite, but for the duration of the sex act the man feels, “Yes, I have penetrated her, I have possessed her,” and the woman feels, “Yes, I have accepted him into me, I have possessed him.”

I have always said that women are more possessive than are men, and that 99.99 percent of women are possessive. And whenever I say this, some woman objects. But look at physiology again! The vagina accepts the penis, not vice versa. The female is meant to possess, and the male is meant to feel that he is being possessed. Nowadays, of course, when everything is so topsy-turvy, many men have become possessive, but this is pathological; it only happens because they are unsure of their own masculinity. Men are very worried about their sexual performance, their ability to make a woman feel that she is “full.” This fear of inadequacy makes them fear that their partners will have to go to other men to become satisfied, and they defend themselves by becoming possessive.

But that is abnormal. It is normal for a woman to be somewhat possessive, and only the greatest women can go beyond it, just as only the greatest men can go beyond their image of themselves as great stud bulls who women are supposed to want to possess. Then of course you have Freud, who claimed that everything was due to penis envy, but that is another matter. Right now, let us consider the sex act.

When the penis and the vagina unite there is a great satisfaction in both partners; possession, partial unity, has taken place. This partial unity overwhelms them with the desire to attain to perfect unity, and they attempt to move their bodies even closer together until their

nervous systems overload and orgasm occurs. During the moment of orgasm, the two forget entirely their earthly existence, and for a brief moment—a very brief moment—they are again one. But only for the time the orgasm lasts. Afterward they are again separate.

Most people try to convince themselves that they are satisfied with orgasmic sex, but they cannot. Even if you enjoy sex with real concentration, with real cooperation between the partners, the satiation will last for a week or two at the most, and then the desire will again arise. Of course, if you are chasing sex for the orgasm alone and not for the love, you will not be satiated even by copulating ten times a day. You will end up a pervert; there is no escape. Orgasm is just a physical reflex; it causes no satisfaction on its own, just "tension release." To really enjoy an orgasm, you must enjoy your partner. You must love your partner sincerely, and you must be more interested in his or her gratification than in your own.

With ordinary sex between two partners who are fully receptive to each other's needs, satiation can't last more than two weeks. But with *vajroli* (see below) a couple can enjoy themselves so fully in one sexual experience that for three months or more the sexual urge never rears its head. They feel so close to one another that there is just no need for the temporary closeness provided by an orgasm. There is real beauty in such a relationship. This is what the West has yet to learn: sex is something that deserves a lot of time and effort to perfect, to make the effect unique and lasting.

How many people in the world really know about sex? Oh, I know, there are Masters and Johnson, and so many other sexologists, and dozens of books on the subject, but how many people have really become experts at sex? We Indians, only a few of us, are the only ones in the world who really know the spiritual erotic art. Westerners are doing plenty of research, but they have a long, long way to go. If they were to learn our techniques they would be able to perform them very well, because they are willing to try anything new. They have very few inhibitions left, in contrast to today's Indians who have plenty.

But there is such a difference in the mentality of a Westerner and an Easterner! And sex is all in the mind, no matter what anyone tells you. Take prostitution as an example. A Western whore watches the clock very closely. Once your time is up, you must emit and depart. But here in India, suppose you try to climb on the lady too early. She will tell you, "No, my lord, wait, the night is yet young, we have until morning to enjoy our play." If you fart in the bed of a Western whore, she will say, "Oh, you bloody stinking fellow!" But an Indian girl would tell you, "What a man you are! Even the gas you pass is melodious!" Of course, this is the way things used to be; under the influence of the West, Indians are gradually becoming clock-watchers.

Don't you think a man is more likely to perform well in response to a supportive and caring attitude rather than one which is strictly businesslike? I don't mean to say that Indian prostitutes have hearts of gold; far from it. They put on this act because they know it will help generate more revenue from the customer. Here in India, both get what they want: the man thinks he is being treated like a lord, and the lady gets paid for having a good time. And in the West? Only business. We Indians are very emotional and to trick us you have only to play on our emotions.

Westerners have become very clinical on the subject of sex. I read in *Time* magazine the review of a book written about the clitoris. Very nice, but inexact. Very few people in the world understand women's orgasms, and in the East only about 1/10 of 1 percent of women have any idea of what an orgasm is. In the West at least 10 percent do, because they all read the sex manuals and try out what they read, but they are still groping, they don't have a complete grasp of the subject. To begin with, they should forget all about quantity and should concentrate on quality; one good orgasm satisfying to both partners is worth a hundred ordinary physical responses. For this they must try to understand the true nature of sex.

THE RNANUBANDHANA OF SEX

In reality, there is nothing to sex but rnanubandhana. Freud was right to argue that the sex instinct is inherent in all creatures, inborn in each one. But did he know why? Did he know that the sex instinct actually begins with the union of the sperm and ovum, because that is a sex act all its own, a union of male and female? Sexuality begins with conception, and as soon as the child is born it is aware of its sexuality. Doesn't the penis of a tiny infant become erect? Since erection occurs only when the ego self-identifies with the penis, ego awareness of sexuality must be present even in infancy.

Two people can be mutually attracted to one another only if there was some relationship between them in a previous life. They may have been animals or insects or humans, but if they copulated, then they will be overwhelmed by the urge to copulate when they meet in this life. And just because they were mates or husband and wife in a previous existence, it does not always happen that they must be husband and wife in this life. They may come back as mother and son, father and daughter, or brother and sister; then the result will be incest. In the past these instincts were rigidly controlled by the rules of society, and those cases of incest which did occur were hidden deep. Today everything is out in the open.

Now, the person of subtle intelligence will be able to discover so

many things about two people who copulate. For one, suppose it is a mother and her son who unite sexually. Does the mother make the son climb on her or is it the son who initiates the activity? By knowing this you can know who was the male in the last encounter, in the last birth. Normally, the male is dominant. He first indicates his desire for sex, and then the female acquiesces. She will acquiesce only if there was a relationship between them in the past. She will be overcome by the urge developed during that previous liaison. If the female in this birth takes the initiative, she must previously have been the male.

Even the posture taken during coitus is determined by that previous relationship. You know, I suppose, that camels and rhinos mate hindways; the penis points backward in these species. Each species has its own peculiarities of mating, and if you know all the possible wombs, like a rishi does, the sex posture alone is sufficient to pinpoint the species involved in the previous relationship.

This knowledge can be beneficial. Suppose I have knowledge of my previous births. I meet a girl I like and we go to bed together. Since I know the form we shared previously—fish, bird, mammal, or whatever—I will refer to my mental files and locate the sex techniques appropriate to that species and then deliberately initiate that technique. She and I will then instinctively enjoy that sex much more than we would have, had we used any other posture, because subconsciously we go back to our previous state, which makes the conscious mind drop away, which increases the passion. That sex will be so satisfying that the rnanubandhana is fulfilled completely by one session. My work is done; another rna is crossed off my list. The girl enjoys herself better than she has ever enjoyed before. No one is a loser. This is especially important because, as a male, I have the obligation to satiate my partner.

To know the rnanubandhana is to be able to decide how and when to fulfill it. If I know *Shiva Svarodaya*, the science of breath, I can deliberately inhale certain of my partner's breaths during a deep embrace, and she will never be able to leave me. When I know the rnanubandhana is finished and it is time for our relationship to end, I will inhale certain other breaths and she will develop an aversion for me and we will split; it's as simple as that. She never knows what has happened. She thinks it is all her own volition that she came to me and that she left. She forgets that there is no such thing as free will.

There comes a point, though, when sex becomes tiresome. How much can you perform the sex act, anyway? Eventually you have to tire of it. Suppose that a certain couple had enjoyed sex so much in a past birth that they were fully satiated. When they meet in this birth they will have a desire for sex, but they will never be impelled to follow through on that desire. They must have a desire for sex

together because they were related sexually in the past; it is axiomatic. But if they avoid sex in this birth, their relationship will become much more intense.

Physical sex makes you more aware of your body, which weakens your mind. This makes you more interested in gratifying your body and makes it less likely that you'll remain faithful to one partner. When your relationship is purely or predominantly mental though, there comes a point when you will be unable to do without your partner, the ties will be so strong. You'll never be tempted to look at anyone else because you know you'll never find anyone else to understand you so well. A peculiar sort of Maya will bond the two of you together. Whenever you are apart, you will always long for the day when you will be reunited; you yearn for each other, to share your professions, your hobbies, your pastimes, and, most of all, your sadhana. There is such a beautiful lingering memory that you can't bear separation, but there is almost no desire for sex because just a kiss or a hug or the touch of a hand is enough to satisfy. Isn't this better than repetitively going through the moanings and groanings of physical sex? Isn't this more refined?

Like music, sex is an art, and you must be artistic if you hope to become good at sex. Everything in life should be artistic, in my opinion; otherwise, what is the use of living? This is the main grudge I have against Westerners: They are so crude and rough. It is because they are slaves to time, always in such a hurry to get things done that they rarely have time to do anything right, with art, grace, and culture. And now the Westerners are spreading this disease all around the world.

There has never been any other lover in the world like Lord Krishna, and there will never again be another like Him. He had more than 16,000 wives, and every woman who saw Him immediately fell in love with Him and melted into Him. When He lived among the cowherds of Brindavan, He used to dance with the women of the village the dance known as the Rasa Lila. There is an esoteric meaning for this and every other event in Krishna's life, of course, but besides that, an imitation of the Rasa Lila has been performed as a folk dance for millennia here in India. A boy and a girl stand opposite one another, each holding a pair of slim sticks. They wheel and whirl, tapping their sticks together to the rhythm of the dance. Most intricate, fascinating to watch. But now the vulgar have made the music disco, and the children beat their sticks together violently. The last time I encouraged Robby to join in I thought he would be beaten soundly by the girl he was dancing with! She was that rough.

Our society is regressing into barbarism; it's sad. Is it any wonder that people have no time or interest for mere kissing and holding

hands or lying together quietly side by side? Such development in a couple occurs only after many lives lived together. Today, people will not settle for anything less than sex, usually rough and violent sex, and even that fails to satisfy them.

MARRIAGE

Most people cannot get out of the rnanubandhana of sex, which is why society developed the institution of marriage. Originally, there was no such system as marriage here in India. People were more primitive, something like cavemen. If I wanted some woman I would just go and take her, and no one could say anything about it. Svetaketu changed all that.

One day Svetaketu, his father, Uddalaka Rishi, and his mother were all sitting peacefully near their hut. A brahmana walked up to his mother, said "Come with me!" and carried her away. Svetaketu wanted to follow him and bring his mother back, but his father dissuaded him gently, saying, "Someday you will steal someone's wife yourself." Then Svetaketu's young heart was so hurt that he vowed he would change society so that no children would ever again be so cavalierly deprived of their mothers. And so marriage came into being.

Still, the ancient sacrament of marriage was nothing like what we have today. Back then, if a boy and girl decided to marry, they would go out alone together to a secluded place and would take the sun, or the fire, the water or another of the Great Elements as a witness, and that was it. From that time forth, they were man and wife. Plenty of rituals were added later by the priestly class to prolong the ceremony for the priests' benefit, but the essence of the rite is still the same. Every Vedic wedding today still takes Fire as a witness, because no marriage is regarded as irrevocably solemnized until the couple takes seven steps around the sacred fire.

The true Vedics never consummated a marriage the day it took place no matter how auspicious the wedding day might be. The bride would return home with her parents to wait for another auspicious day, so chosen that by copulating on that day the couple would achieve such satisfaction that they would never think of leaving each other. Another advantage to the wait between the ceremony and the consummation was that both parties had time to prepare themselves mentally. The days they spent apart served to heighten their desire for each other, from anticipation of the sex they would enjoy together. I have always said that fifty percent of the enjoyment of a romance lies in the waiting period, when you don't know whether the opposite party will fall in love with you or not. You can't be sure, you can't

take anything for granted, you are on tenterhooks continuously. After you both know you love each other, part of the joy is lost, but part still remains: “If I make a mistake, he (or she) might leave me.” This keeps you always on your best behavior.

But after marriage, you know you always have each other, you have ready sex whenever you want it, and your partner dare not leave you since society will point a finger if he or she does. The result? All the magic, the mystery, the danger disappears from the relationship; it becomes devitalized. And then there is nothing to do but endure it or, if you are an American, divorce.

In India we have known about human psychology for a long time, and this wait before the bride is taken to her husband’s house is one means of making the marriage a success. Each day the longing would increase until both bride and groom would be half-mad with desire by the time the auspicious day rolled around. Then the bride would be decked out in a beautiful sari and whatnot and would travel by stages to her husband’s house. With her she would carry a big silver glass filled with milk: two liters boiled down into one, mixed with almonds, pistachios, saffron, and so on. She would also bring five paans. Each paan would have extra ingredients added to it, and each would be folded into a particular shape.

After all the greetings and other formalities, which would be suitably prolonged to drive the newlyweds to distraction, the bride and groom would enter their nuptial chamber, and no one would disturb them until they emerged.

The first paan would be square-folded. Both would eat it together so their lips would meet in a kiss. That kiss, the first kiss of passion in their lives, would be prolonged, and when the young man would then look at his wife’s lips he would see them blood-red because of the paan juice. And you know what red is to a bull: it intoxicates, excites him.

People talk about kissing, but they don’t have any idea about how many types of kisses there are. Let me tell you about just three of them. The kiss of entanglement is a kiss on the lips, which is practiced by lovers or by husband and wife. It entangles you further and further in the Maya of sex. The satanic kiss is a kiss on the eyes by a dakini or a pishacha. This kiss makes you see the ethereal world, which will in all probability drive you insane; that is why it is satanic. When Ma kisses you, though, She will kiss you on your forehead at the location of your third eye, which She causes to open. This is the kiss of enlightenment, the kiss of true Motherhood, and the day Ma gives you this kiss you become filled with Her Divine Intelligence. I think this is the best type of kiss, and after enjoying it, I never feel like enjoying any other type of kiss. I want only Her sweet lips.

But most human beings insist on fleshly lips. Most human beings, unfortunately, have become so obsessed with sex that they have forgotten the beauty of a kiss. Forget coitus; once you have kissed someone, once you have come so close to another being as to unite your mouths together, how can you forget that person? Isn't sex just the uniting of the lower mouths together? When someone has so totally surrendered to you as to open his or her body to you, shouldn't you always remember that surrender? Most people don't, though; they enjoy and forget. It just goes to show that all sex today is directed solely by rnanubandhana. Traditionally, though, a couple would experience a romantic kiss first on that night of consummation, and it would be the experience of a lifetime for them.

The second paan was to be placed between the girl's breasts. The boy would take it with his mouth, using his tongue to clean and excite the area, thus igniting the erotic centers of the upper body. Remember how the ancient Romans in their orgies used to pour wine over the women's breasts and then lick it up? This is the same sort of thing.

The third paan was to be folded flat and placed at the navel, a very important erotic center. Here the boy was not to use his tongue, only his lips. The erotic centers ignited above should now be truly inflamed.

The fourth paan was to be folded conically and placed in the vagina. As the young man bit it the conical tip would pierce the hymen. By this time the bride should be experiencing uncontrollable spasms. The boy would then mount her and discharge. If they knew vajroli, of course, there would be no discharge; he would make her have so many orgasms that she would be satiated for a full three months. In any event, after coitus they would both share the fifth paan, kissing again, and then they would drink the milk. Ayurveda says, "After food, drink buttermilk, and after sex, drink hot milk." The milk strengthened and invigorated them for further play.

At Indian marriage ceremonies a round fruit which looks something like a walnut and is called a *madanaphala* (*Randia dumetorum*) is tied around the groom's wrist. Most people today don't bother to search for the real thing and tie any convenient root or fruit instead, and even the people who tie the real madanaphala don't know what it is meant for. Madana is one of the names of the god of love, and *phala* means fruit. Madanaphala is one of the best of aphrodisiacs. It is tied around the groom's wrist for the bride's benefit. Should he ever become impotent she would take that fruit which he had worn at the wedding, to which a small ritual had been done, and would administer it to him after preparing it in the prescribed way. Then he would again be able to perform his sexual duty to her. This was another of the customs propounded by our rishis for the

preservation of family and society, but as our society declines, this knowledge is being lost.

Circumstances today just don't permit most people ever to have satisfactory sex. In the West, no one allows themselves the time—as I've said, they are all clock-watchers. In India, we have plenty of time but no privacy. The Indian couple is always afraid that auntie or little brother may be watching, spying on them. This destroys the mood. Sex being all in the mind, what is the use in indulging in it without the proper mood? Another reason I am not in favor of today's sort of marriage is that it ruins sex. Marriage has become licensed prostitution. Neither the man nor his wife is legally permitted to enjoy with anyone else, so there is no incentive to gratify the partner. Everything regresses to self-gratification.

For years and years, the priests burned widows alive on their husbands' funeral pyres, claiming that by doing so the women would become *sati*. Nothing could be more ridiculous. If a man and a woman are deeply in love, the one will not be able to last once the other dies; the longing is just too strong. My own father lived only a couple of years after the death of my mother, and during that time we would often find him sitting apart, wiping the tears from his eyes. A woman who finds herself bereft of her husband whom she truly loved as her god incarnate will not find any further interest in life and will die. She may not throw herself on the pyre; she may starve herself or just waste away, but she will quit living. She is Sati; she has gone beyond rna and will meet her man again in future births. So long as you are restricted by rna you have no free will; only when the limitation of rna is broken can you become Sati.

A woman who is not so attached to her husband will not bother too much about his death. She will continue living; she might marry again. The rnanubandhana between her and her former husband is broken. They will no longer be born together but will go their separate ways. The same goes for a man whose wife dies and who then forgets her. These are not true marriages, only arrangements for the fulfillment of rnanubandhana. I say, why bother with marriage at all? It is no longer necessary to marry to enjoy sex; people enjoy more or less as they please nowadays. The only other use of marriage is to make the children you produce legitimate in the eyes of the law. This is convenient but is not an insurmountable difficulty if you prefer otherwise; many famous men and women were illegitimate. Why bother to marry and create complications for yourself?

CREATION AND PROCREATION

Human beings like to procreate, to reproduce their own kind. If

they could learn to create, there is no limit to what they could achieve. But you have to give up procreation before you can begin to create, and few, very few, are willing to do that.

Let me try to explain the difference between creation and procreation. It's really all in the point of view. Ordinary men and women treat Nature as something external to them. They talk about Nature procreating because they see the continuous birth and death of the samsara surrounding them. Because of ignorance, they conveniently forget that they too are part of the copulating game, insignificant worms in the samsara themselves. They self-identify with their own limited bodies and personalities. This puts them under the control of Nature and they are not even aware of it; they remain subject to the Law of Karma and to rebirth.

If they could go beyond their limitations, they could actually see that Nature is really doing the creating. Nature has control over the patterns that manifest, and all the reproduction in the world is just the natural outcome of the impulse of Nature. Therefore, it is Nature who creates, and ordinary mortals who procreate.

Humans think it is the other way around, out of ignorance. They believe that through sex they are creating a child. Why should they want a child? They just want someone to reproduce their own attributes, someone who will appreciate and love them. Just as Shiva and Shakti generate universes in which beings can, by means of hard penances, come to the stage of admiring and loving the Father and Mother of the Cosmos, a man and a woman produce a child in the expectation of receiving love and admiration from it. But this is really procreation because they are unaware of the rnanubandhana, the impulse which impels them to do it. Real creation becomes possible only when they become aware of that impulse and transcend it. However, if everyone realized all at once their true selves, then there would be no one to fall prey to Maya and continue to ride the wheel of birth and death. Nature, therefore, keeps almost everyone in ignorance. Isn't it wonderful?

Conception is in itself a wonderful process. All the sperm have the same determination: "I must go through the cervix to the uterus, get into the tube, locate the ovum, and unite with it." The ovum is single and passive; it doesn't have to search for the sperm. The sperm have to swim hard against the current, and, of the millions ejaculated, only one is finally accepted by the egg. What can we learn from this?

First, the male should always be the active partner and the female the passive partner in the sex act. This is Nature's way, as exemplified in the physical process of sex. A man will never be able to penetrate if he cannot maintain an erection, and even after penetration, he must make movements. The woman needs to do nothing but lie still and

allow it to happen. She can cooperate if she pleases, but it is not at all necessary.

One of the problems with Westerners today is that some women are attempting to become the aggressive factor in the relationship. As I mentioned before, this is because they were males in their previous existences, and their present male partners were the females then. Although it is easy to give in to these past tendencies, it is better to resist them and to learn the gender roles appropriate for your sex this time around. The male is meant to be dominant because Shiva must always control Shakti. This is why the male should be on top during copulation and why the woman must be beneath him. Shiva must be on top to control. If the woman is on top, Shakti is in control, but Shakti knows no control. The result? The male might become a pervert, because the free-flowing Shakti will cause his perverted karmas to emanate from the causal body. The idea that the woman should actively climb on top of the man is completely against Nature. What happens during vajroli is different, of course.

Second, only that sperm which will provide the specific heredity required by the spirit who is to take birth will be selected by the egg. The sperm having the strongest rnanubandhana with the ovum is always the winner. If the child is meant to be born blind or deformed or mentally retarded, only that spermatozoon that fits the bill in its entirety will make it to the egg.

"*Gahana karmano gatih*": The ways of karma are profoundly deep. Sometimes even when there are plenty of sperm, they run into a "No Vacancy" sign when they try to meet the egg. If there is no jiva with sufficient rnanubandhana, or if the horoscope that would result will not fit the requirements of the jiva, or if there is some curse, you may pour in liters of semen and still conception will not occur.

If there is enough rnanubandhana to attract some jiva, then that disembodied spirit will impel the sperm and ovum to meet. When they unite the two become one; duality is ended. But this unity, like the unity of orgasm, is very temporary. Because of the overwhelming joy of the union, the sperm and ovum procreate and form billions of cells. As the zygote begins to divide, duality begins again.

Until the heart starts to beat, the jiva is in a state of bliss, at one with Krishna, in a state of union with the Absolute. Once the heart starts to beat, personalized existence begins, separation from the Beloved. The jiva really begins to self-identify with the fetus only after the heart starts to beat. The jiva enters the zygote at the moment of conception, to be sure; otherwise growth and movement would never occur. We say, though, that life really begins in the fourth month, and after the seventh month the jiva has a firm grip on the fetus because it is then that the fetus becomes viable if premature labor occurs.

The jiva in the womb has a memory of past lives. This explains why the fetus kicks and moves about: it recalls its past freedom and resents being trapped in a cramped womb, surrounded by hot, fetid intestines, tortured by the spicy food, intoxicants, and other inappropriate things its mother indulges in. The subtle body completely self-identifies with the fetus and enjoys the placental food. Despite the torments of living in its own waste products, it never wants to leave the womb, because it remembers its past lives and comprehends the mistakes it has made. It promises God that if it is permitted to remain in the womb indefinitely, it will worship with concerted mind. At the moment of birth, though, the fetus is cut off from the placenta. Because it craves food it projects its mind outward and forgets its past lives. When its head is squeezed coming through the birth canal it forgets everything and comes in to the world screaming, "*Koham*? *Koham*? [Who am I? Who am I?]" Some hear in its cries "Uma! Uma!" Uma is one of the names of Shiva's wife, Parvati. By crying "Uma!," Shakti is calling, "I am here!"

The embryo or fetus is the characteristic of Maya. At the time of birth, the fetus forgets all the promises it has made to God about what it will do after its birth because the mother and father were copulating only for pleasure, not to have a child. Even in those couples whose aim was to procreate, the last moments of coitus produce such great passion that they forget everything except the bliss of sex, and this is what makes the child forgetful as it is born. Out of a million cases, maybe one couple will unite for the specific purpose of producing progeny and will keep that determination even through the orgasm. That child will remain fuzzily aware of his past existence; he will have a sort of ESP.

Why should a guru call the disciples who come to him "children"? Because in a very real way he is creating them, though not through the usual method of procreation. He is not interested in the body at all, only in what is within the body.

Jesus said, "You must be born again." He meant that you must be given a new birth by your guru. The guru must recreate you after first destroying you. Your ordinary physical birth pushes your face into the slush of the samsara. The guru gives you a new birth which takes you out of the world.

Doesn't it make sense then for an aghori to die to the world? Once you are dead, you can be easily reborn, and this time with full consciousness of who you are. When a guru "mates" with his Shakti to create a disciple, he does it not for pleasure but to fulfill a specific purpose. Such a "child" is bound to be clairaudient and clairvoyant, isn't he?

This is why a true guru will always be celibate. He is not interested

in using his semen for mere procreation; he preserves it for something better. Today everyone pooh-poohs this idea. They say, "Semen is only a natural product. There is no harm in evicting it as much as you like." In fact, I was told that one theory making the rounds in America now is that if a man does not ejaculate at least once every forty-eight hours, he runs the risk of enlargement of the prostate. How absurd! What rubbish! The fact is, too much emission of semen is much more likely to cause prostate enlargement in old age than is too little ejaculation.

OJAS

For creation you must use the semen in a different way than the way you use it for procreation. Semen is that substance in the male body which has the ability to create. Only procreation is possible if it is expelled from the body, ejaculated during the sex act. If it is retained within the body, stored instead of being wasted, then real creation becomes possible through *ojas*. Ojas is the source of the body's metabolic energy, the Jathara Agni. Loss of semen means loss of ojas and thus loss of digestive power. Ayurveda cautions that all diseases result from disturbed digestion, which explains why Ayurveda always also cautions that the wise man should preserve his semen.

It is said in Ayurveda that ojas is derived from semen, but this is not quite so. Ojas exists in association with the head and the nervous system. In fact, the 'aura' or 'halo' which you can see around a person's head is composed of his or her ojas. When I say that loss of semen causes loss of ojas, you must remember that sex is all in the mind. Before the penis surges into erection there must be a mental command for it to do so. When thoughts of sex fill the mind the *Kama Agni* (Fire of Lust) becomes inflamed. Heat is anathema to ojas. The Kama Agni causes a disturbance in the ojas, which alters the brain chemistry and directs the endocrine glands to begin to secrete. The effect is first felt on the prostate in men and the Bartholin's gland in women. Whenever oozing from these glands occurs you can be sure that ojas is being dissipated. During celibacy the ojas goes on and on harmonizing itself.

Women are lucky in that every month all the filth in their blood is drained out. This is the function of menstruation, and each menstrual cycle strengthens a woman's ojas because there is less waste material in the body to disturb digestion or brain chemistry. Unfortunately, since women are nine times more passionate than men, most of them will find that this increased ojas merely serves to increase their sex drive. This will impel them to copulate more, and all the benefits will

be lost. Ayurveda recognizes that the same substances that rejuvenate the body also act as aphrodisiacs and warns that when a rejuvenating effect is desired, sex must be restricted.

Ordinary sexual activity destroys ojas, but so do thoughts of sex and sexual fantasies even if you do not act on them. In fact, continual brooding about anything is equally devastating to the ojas because thought causes the mind and brain to heat up and all this mental heat, no matter what the cause, causes excessive physical heat. According to Ayurveda excess heat in the body leads to constipation, the root of most diseases. Heat also causes hypersecretion of all the glands, which in turn excites the mind via the body. It's a vicious cycle. Excess coolness in the body can be readily dealt with; excess heat is dangerous. Any unnatural heat ruins the ojas just as surely as does an inflamed Kama Agni.

Likewise, harmonious thoughts increase ojas. How often have you heard someone say to a pregnant woman, "What a glow you have about your face!" That glow is the aura, composed of ojas. You might think that a pregnant woman's ojas would be low because her body tissues are being depleted to furnish nutrients for the baby. But because of the emotions of motherhood, the overwhelming love for the child being formed, ojas actually increases.

CONSERVATION

If you want to progress from the state of being a donkey in human form, one who lives for eating and procreating, to a higher state, you must conserve your semen. If you are female, you must preserve the vaginal secretions which pour out during excitement and sex. The need for celibacy is the same in both sexes. There are dozens of good reasons for *brahmacharya* (celibacy), but we will consider just a few.

First, Newton's Third Law of Motion: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. When a man indulges in too much sex or masturbation, he kills millions upon millions of sperm. He gets a little thrill out of it, but he must reproduce all those living beings again within his body. Celibacy is not meant to remove all pleasure from life; it is meant to avoid killing sperm, among other things. After such an overindulgent man has died, isn't Nature right to make him be born as a spermatozoon for at least seven births? Then he learns what it is like to be wasted: living quietly in the body, a brief moment of joy, freedom, and—finished. And such a man will continue to be reborn as a sperm until he can locate an ovum with which he has some rnanubandhana. You see, hells are not imaginary. Some of them exist outside the earth but many exist right here. It's just that we can't see them easily. When you become aware of the real significance of,

say, Kumbhipaka, the hell in which you are born and reborn as a spermatozoon, well, then you will say, "Oh, yes, now I realize…."

Second, if you are not interested in sex, then it will be impossible for any voluptuous, passionate young woman to entrap you or, if you are female, for any man to sweet-talk you. Since you have nothing physical to take from anyone, you will never have to subject yourself to scheming lovers and succumb to their wiles. The more you indulge in sex the more your mind becomes attached to it. This makes it far easier for someone, human or spirit, to use sex as a bait to hook you. Abstinence, brahmacharya, is safer.

Third, brahmacharya makes your nerves very strong. Sex is a nervous response of the body. The more you enervate your body the more mentally unstable or "infirm" do you become. You can't afford to have weak nerves if you want to perform Aghora sadhanas because the first wild shrieking spirit who comes along will reduce you to a gibbering wreck, or will give you such a rude shock that your nervous system will collapse and you'll die of heart failure. Or, if your guru wanted to give you some of his Shakti, your nervous system might not be able to take it, in which case you would run amok.

Fourth, the body's agni controls not only the body's digestion but also that of the mind, which has to digest all the new things it learns every day. Loss of semen causes loss of ojas which dulls the mental digestion, which is especially bad for spiritual aspirants, who must develop subtle perception.

Fifth, the physical pleasure of sex arises from the stimulation of nerves in the genitals, resulting from the friction caused by the movements of the penis in the vagina or anus. Our ancient Indian scientists knew the value of the anus as an erotic center, mind you. Be it vagina, anus, or mouth, the friction produces heat, which destabilizes the mind. The more you copulate, the less firm will be your mind. As I've noted, firmness of mind is especially essential in Aghora.

Sixth, years of brahmacharya will develop great strength of ojas. Your aura or halo will develop to such an extent that whoever meets you will feel refreshed and relieved afterward. The ojas will harmonize both you and those around you. This is the hallmark of a real saint, the test you can use to separate the men from the donkeys.

Finally, copulation causes a disturbance in the Ether Element because of the friction vibrations and the queer thoughts which are engendered in you as a result. These sex vibrations are tremendously irritating to deities and other high ethereal beings. Since most sadhanas involve the attraction of an ethereal being to you, sex is contraindicated in sadhana, absolutely. I once made the mistake of teaching a Ganesha mantra to a man who could not control himself.

He remained celibate for almost three months and then, just when he was about to achieve, he decided he had to have some sex. He went in to his wife, who unsuccessfully tried to prevent him from sleeping with her. After enjoying himself twice he went to sleep. In a dream he saw an enraged elephant chasing him and giving him a good slap with its trunk. The next morning his face was swollen to twice its normal size. He was removed to the hospital and died that night.

Ganesha is the lord of the Muladhara Chakra, the lowest of the energy centers, in which the Kundalini lies sleeping. Now just imagine: if you are doing penance to make the energy move upward and suddenly you reverse its flow and make it move downward in great spasms, what is going to happen? You will blow out your nervous system like this man did.

Consider two other benefits of remaining celibate. According to Ayurveda, it takes thirty days for a drop of semen to form. In those who are good celibates, the semen is so sticky that it can be pulled out into a meter-long thread without breaking; very sticky. And its consistency is like cream. If it falls onto cloth it can be knocked off without staining or separating. Such high-quality semen is sure to produce high-quality progeny if used for that purpose.

Also, ojas is a living substance. We say it is derived from semen because the jivas in the unused sperm give up their individual existence and merge with the ojas. This can happen only in a true celibate and is a sort of blessing to the jivas in the sperms because they become exempt from taking future births. I mentioned that the ojas forms the halo or aura which attracts people to a saint. How could they be attracted unless it was a living substance? I am talking about a true attraction here, not some sensory enticement. Buddha's aura, for instance, affected everyone within a fifty-mile radius of wherever he was staying; they all became automatically calmer and more introverted.

I hope you know now some of the importance of brahmacharya. Now it is necessary to consider the methods by which celibacy can be preserved. The most obvious method is simple avoidance of sex, but this is not perfect. The more you restrict yourself, the more frequent will be your nocturnal emissions. If you go in for physical control, you must be very thorough. Some asanas will deaden the sexual nerves. In certain rituals a thin wire is passed through the penis and tied tightly around it to ensure that not even a drop of prostate fluid is lost. But all this is limited because if the mind is not controlled, thoughts of sex will still emanate and ojas will be lost. Loss of ojas is far more detrimental to the body and mind than is loss of physical semen.

The mind must be controlled. Ganja and tobacco smoked together 'burn' the semen if you don't eat any heavy food afterward. The

tobacco makes you physically impotent, and the ganja makes you mentally impotent. This is quite useful, but it is still reliance on external agencies. You must “burn” the sex center in the brain, up in the thalamus, if you want to be perfectly free of sexual proclivities. Some people say that celibacy means never discharging semen, even in a dream; but I say that only that man who never even gets an erection is the true celibate. His penis should not even ‘rumble’ when he gets some stimulus. Not only should a good female celibate not ooze from her vagina, but her clitoris should not even twitch once. Mental control is essential if you hope to achieve this state.

This is not an overnight process, you understand. It takes years, and a good guru is necessary. He will allow his “child” to try out sex as much as he or she likes for a month or so. After the month is over, the “child” will know exactly what are the effects of sex on the body, mind, and sadhana, and he or she will understand why it is useless to try to do serious sadhana and simultaneously try to carry on an active sex life.

An aghori takes a somewhat different approach to sex and celibacy, of course. One day I got wild with my penis. I told it, “You bloody thing, what do you think of yourself, always spoiling my sleep by becoming hard?” I went into the bathroom and found some acid and poured it over my penis. My God, it was terrible! Then, when the pain was troubling me I got wilder and said, “So, not enough, eh?” and I grated some green chilies and applied them as a poultice. I can’t tell you what agony I was in for three days, but it healed without a scar. In fact, it acted as a sort of purification.

Ayurveda states that semen resides in the brain. The thick white semen from the testicles does not travel upward into the head, of course; this statement means that the brain is the seat of ojas, because the whole process which culminates in the ejaculation of semen begins with a disturbance in the mind which causes certain brain cells to be dilated. This dilation causes ojas to move downward and impel the seminal movement via the neurotransmitters. A firm mind means firm ojas and no emission of semen; loss of mental control means loss of both ojas and semen.

Firmness of the mind is always difficult, if only because you have so many rnanubandhanas with so many individuals of the opposite sex that you will always be running into someone with whom you once had a sexual relationship, no matter how far you try to hide from society.

Once a certain lady used to come daily to offer fruit and what-have-you to a certain celibate sadhu. The day came when she asked if she could massage his legs. He permitted her to do so. In the course of the massage her hand accidentally touched his penis. “Don’t touch

that!" he commanded. "That is Mahapapa (the Great Sinner)."

The next day, to return the favor, the sadhu started to massage the lady. Accidentally his hand touched her vulva. "Maharaj," she said, "don't touch there. That is Naraka Kunda (the Pit of Hell)." The sadhu, however, had become excited by the touch of her genitals and said to her, "You know that the only place for sinners is hell. Therefore, if I now place the Great Sinner into the Pit of Hell, all sin will be extinguished!" The lady, who had also become excited by his touch, was only too ready to agree. And that is how the sadhu came to lose his celibacy.

Even if you can maintain your physical celibacy, though, you may still get yourself into trouble if you are not careful. The original Shankaracharya was himself once made to learn a good lesson because he forgot that mental brahmacharya is more important than physical brahmacharya. He wanted to debate with Mandan Mishra on religious texts in the city of Mithila. Entering the city, he made his way to a group of young women at a well to ask for directions to his adversary's house. The girls had a nice laugh at his expense when they heard why he had come and told him, "Maharaj, before you try to debate with Mandan Mishra first debate with his parrots, and if you can defeat them, then only think of going on to him." Shankaracharya left in a huff, but once he reached Mandan Mishra's house he saw the truth of what they had said: All the parrots in the big banyan trees encircling the house were reciting texts they had memorized because of Mandan Mishra's habit of practicing out loud in his garden.

Shankaracharya was greeted warmly by his opponent, who realized what the zealous young man had in mind. Recalling the obligation that a host has to his guests, Mandan Mishra offered food to Shankaracharya, but it was indignantly refused: "No, I have come to debate, not to eat." Mandan Mishra's wife told him, "You will have your debate without fail, Maharaj, but first please do enjoy a meal with us." Shankaracharya was adamant, however, so the debate began.

Before long it became clear that Mandan Mishra could not win. Suddenly his wife said to Shankaracharya, "Maharaj, the texts state that the husband and the wife are two halves of the same being. You must also debate with me, the *vamangi*, the left half of my husband." Shankaracharya had no choice but to agree.

She began to discuss the erotic art, the *Kamakala*. Her opponent had never had any experience of women and was therefore unable to answer her. Moreover, as he was a sworn celibate, there was no way he could go out and experience sex so as to learn about it. What to do? He asked for a recess of the debate. Mandan Mishra's wife smiled at him and said, "Maharaj, nowhere in the rules of debate is a recess

permitted. You are about to lose. But that's all right; you are our guest. Take your recess." Only Ma could be so generous, even at the cost of victory.

Shankaracharya went back to his disciples and told them to guard his body carefully. He then went into a trance and used his subtle body to enter the physical body of an old king who had just died. Everyone in attendance on the king was astonished, to say the least, to see the ruler jump back to life. His wives—kings always possess large harems—were especially astonished because he immediately called them in to him. Some of them noticed a change in his personality, especially during lovemaking, but they feared for their necks and dared not say anything.

Having thoroughly learned the science of love from these ladies, Shankaracharya returned to his own body and defeated Mandan Mishra's wife in the debate. Then, feeling generous, his ego pampered by his success, he said grandly, "Now, Mandan Mishra, I am pleased to appoint you head of my monastery at Jyotirmath near Badrinath."

Mandan Mishra's wife laughed in Shankaracharya's face and said, "At one time I thought you were a true ascetic, but now I see you are a fake just like all the rest."

Shankaracharya got the shock of his lifetime and said, ''What do you mean?''

She replied, "You teach that the physical universe is just an illusion and that Maya does not exist. If you are not your body but are the pure, undefiled Universal Soul as you claim to be, then your vow of celibacy applies to your body and to your mind and to your entire consciousness. How could you then legitimately enjoy sex through your subtle body? Are you not guilty of breaking your vows? Is this not a stain, a stigma, on your ochre robes of renunciation?

"Moreover, if the Universal Soul is all that exists in the universe and all else is illusory, then you and your debating and your success in this debate are also illusory. If you, I, and my husband are all the same Universal Soul, then with whom are you debating? Yourself? Isn't it a contradiction in terms?

"My husband is named Mandana ("construction"); he believes in building things up. He encourages and provides confidence to those who come to him. You believe only in destruction—and for what? To prove to the world, which you believe to be illusory, that you are unconquerable in debate. What is your value? Can you compare with my husband?"

Shankaracharya had to keep quiet. Shakti had taught him a good lesson.[1]

Now, a distinction between physical and mental brahmacharya

does in fact exist, even though Mandan Mishra's wife was correct in her argument that a sworn *brahmachari* must observe total celibacy. Even if you must perform mental sex to complete some rnanubandhana, it is never bad to preserve bodily celibacy, nor is it bad to preserve mental brahmacharya, to be completely aloof from the body, if you must perform physical coitus to fulfill some rna. This is how an aghori works, in fact: The body does whatever it must do to complete its rnas, and the mind is a passive observer, never self-identifying with the actions of the body. It is unbelievably difficult, though.

Someone once asked me, "If Tukaram Maharaj was really a true devotee of God, concentrating on Vitthala (Vishnu) twenty-four hours a day, how could he have had two wives and fathered so many children?" This is a good question which deserves a careful answer. Tukaram Maharaj was never apart from Vitthala mentally even while his physical body continued to fulfill its rnanubandhanas. His rnas with his wives included sex, and his body performed the sex act with his wives. His mind, though, was never aware of his body or of what it was doing. His mental brahmacharya was perfect, so he could father children and still remain pure.

But my questioner was not completely satisfied with this explanation and posed another question: "If Tukaram Maharaj was not self-identifying with his body, who was? The penis can become erect only when the ego self-identifies with it. If Tukaram Maharaj's ego had lost itself in Vitthala, what remained to self-identify with his penis?"

I love to answer such questions, because their acuteness shows me that at least some of the people who are listening to me are thinking about what I have said. Something must have been inside Tukaram's body self-identifying; this much is clear. And one other thing is clear: It wasn't Vitthala. If it had been Vitthala or some other deity, or if Tukaram Maharaj had self-identified with the Universal Soul during copulation, then the power of the deity would have been transmitted to the children, even to some tiny extent, and they would have become spiritual giants. But they didn't; they were perfectly ordinary, mundane. There must therefore have been another personality present, one that had sufficient rnanubandhana with Tukaram's wives to perform sex with them through the medium of Tukaram's body. Tukaram Maharaj was not even observing it, though; he was elsewhere.

Rnanubandhana can be completed without physical sex. An ethereal being lacks a body with which to copulate. If that being desires sex, it must locate a couple engaged in the sex act, enter one of their bodies, and enjoy. Self-identification must not be permitted,

though; then there is no stain of karma.

Now, the practical application. Suppose a girl loves me, but perhaps because of the social situation she is unable to marry me and must marry someone else. I am not ethereal, but my subtle body is. When I decide that the time is right to fulfill my rnanubandhana of sex with her, I will wait until she and her husband are in a deep sexual embrace. Then, by entering his body, I will see to it that she gets full satisfaction.

She gets her satisfaction from me, which breaks my rnanubandhana with her. She is fully satiated, because I know how to satiate her; her husband would never be able to do it. But the husband knows that she is satiated and thinks he is responsible. He takes the credit for being a big stud bull, which is fine with me because by his self-identification he gets all the karma. I get my sexual enjoyment and remain untouched by karma. Everyone is happy, and I have preserved my physical celibacy.

SVAPNESHVARI SIDDHI AND SHIVA LATA MUDRA

If you want to preserve even your mental celibacy, you must have some siddhi. Svapneshvari will do nicely. Suppose I discover a rnanubandhana with a girl in France. I find it very inconvenient and time-consuming to travel to France and romance her. So, I send Svapneshvari to her in a male form. In a dream she finds herself enjoying sex with a man whose face is always hidden from her. She is satiated, because sex in a dream is always more satisfying than is physical sex. There are no inhibitions, no fear of discovery, no worry about inadequacy, no restraint to full pleasure in a dream. By satiating her in this way my rnanubandhana with her is broken. She never knows who has come to her and never cares to know, because she has no idea of what has happened. There is no karma and no interruption of either my mental or physical celibacy. Absolute celibacy is too far away for most people, of course, but our Vedic religion has provided for everyone no matter what their level of achievement. If you restrict yourself to having sex with one partner, for example if you are married and engage in sex only with your spouse, this is also brahmacharya, the brahmacharya appropriate for married people. And so long as you observe total celibacy during specific periods of penance you too can achieve great things, if you work hard.

However, even a married man can practice absolute celibacy and still fulfill his sexual duty to his wife if he knows *Shiva Lata Mudra*. He must worship his wife as the cosmic Shakti, and she must worship him as Lord Shiva. Shiva is the controller, Lata the controlled. *Lata* literally means “creeper,” like the ivy which twines around a column. Because

Shakti has emanated from Shiva and wishes to return to Him She is impelled to come into close proximity to Him. He is the center, the Linga, the fixed, unwavering nucleus. To become one with Him, Shakti gives up Her own independent characteristics and makes an absolute surrender to Him. A creeper has no support of its own, which is why it must take the help of a tree or pillar. Once it has selected its support to grow on, the creeper cannot change its mind and shift to another support; she is committed. The tree is beautified by the creeper, the creeper is supported by the tree. Neither is complete without the other.

When a man and a woman come together for Shiva Lata Mudra the woman must sit on the man's left thigh and hold his penis with her right hand. He must cup her left breast with his left hand. Like a creeper she drapes herself around him, clinging tightly like a delicate vine; and he permits himself to be clung to, offering her support.

There are three types of Shiva Lata Mudra: mundane, spiritual, and one which is beyond both the mundane and the spiritual. The mundane gives maximum sexual excitement; the spiritual is for sadhana; and "beyond" is too advanced to be dealt with here. In all types the female counts japa with her left hand, the male with his right. The mantras are specific for each type. He forgets who he is, and she forgets who she is. He thinks, "I am Lord Shiva in the form of Bhairava, and this is my Shakti, my Bhairavi." She thinks, "This is my Lord Shiva, and I am His Grand Consort, His Bhairavi."

If the couple is doing it for mundane purposes they must concentrate on exciting each other. Without realizing it she will begin to breathe through her left nostril and will direct that Shakti to him. His right nostril will be working, and that Shakti of his will be directed to her. Hypersecretion of all the glands will result, and at the moment of greatest excitation cessation of breathing occurs for a moment. Then the male mounts and discharges his semen convulsively. Because of hypersecretion he will now eject three teaspoons of semen as opposed to his normal one teaspoonful. Because her vagina and cervix have become utterly loose and dilated the sperm will go directly to the mouth of the cervix. The result is a child, if this is done at the right time of the month. This is the brahmacharya appropriate for the ordinary householder because by such sex, satiation occurs for a month or more and ojas is not wasted by frequent orgasms.

The spiritual Shiva Lata Mudra is quite different. The Shiva must control his Shakti very carefully to ensure that she does not become sexually excited. The couple should be able to sit together for at least three hours without the least excitation, no twitching or oozing. The girl must understand that she will not get an ordinary orgasm this

way. If she waits patiently she will eventually get a super orgasm which will make her forget sex forever. If this Mudra is done properly she will go into Bhava Samadhi: her emotions will crescendo until her mind becomes totally one-pointed, directed toward Shiva, and she will partly forget her worldly existence, for a while. Even *mahabhava samadhi* is possible: total immersion in Shiva but with retained awareness of the bliss. Wonderful!

The concentration must be intense and the self-identification with Bhairava and Bhairavi perfect. Usually the couple should have already enjoyed plenty of sex together, should have experimented with sex as much as they desired, so that they can drop sex altogether for several months and work for something beyond ordinary copulation. Once a couple gets initiated into this practice, they develop such a liking for it that they count the hours until they can practice it again; they can think of nothing else except performing it. This is good; their minds are effectively disengaged from mundane things by this sadhana and their urge for togetherness is fully satisfied. In the beginning, the woman must be willing to wait. If she is patient and works hard, her experience will affect her more strongly than hundreds of orgasms all at once; she will be forever satiated.

The beauty is the wonderful play of the two partners. At one point the male will feel such overwhelming love for his Shakti that he thinks, "I must give her everything." Then Shakti becomes indignant: "I am your Shakti; how can you give me anything? You are useless without me, you could not even exist." Then Shiva smiles and says, "Oh, is that so? From where did you originate if not from me?" The intoxication of this play cannot be described; you simply have to experience it yourself to know what it is.

This play can only begin when the true personalities of the man and woman surface. Where do you find nowadays a man who is strong as a tree, solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, firm enough to support his partner without a single lapse? And where do you find a woman who is sure enough of herself to surrender totally to her partner, relying totally on him for support like a creeper does on a tree? This is why people find sex so unsatisfactory today, and why they go in for dolls and dildos instead. It is no wonder that today's people are maladjusted sexually. They will get a glimpse of what real sex can be only if they study and practice this technique. Otherwise they will continue to grope about, making a mess of things, screwing without satisfaction, becoming more and more neurotic.

Once the first posture is perfected the couple moves on to the second posture: face to face, the female on the male's lap, the penis near but not in the vagina. Being face to face there is no holding of penis or breast. Once they can sit this way for three hours without the

least excitation there are three other stages. In the final stage there is full penetration of the vagina by the erect penis with full control: not a twitch, not a rumble. Only when this is perfected can they move on to *vajroli*. The examination of a student who might like to learn vajroli involves making two girls sit on the boy, one on each thigh, for three hours. When the boy can do that he has achieved—a little.

I know that many of the people who read this are immediately going to jump up, rush out the door, grab a partner, sit down, and try it out. I don't mind if they do; they will learn soon enough that without adequate prior preparation, it is impossible to succeed at Lata Mudra. You will simply get aroused, and even if you succeed in avoiding orgasm you will still ooze. Until you reach the state where you can self-identify with Bhairava or with Bhairavi for a full three hours at a time, you will be unable to succeed at this because it is not your personality that will be achieving it; it is rather the personality of Shiva or Shakti that you have invoked and projected into yourself that will succeed at it. Without a guru to show you the way you can try this for a hundred years and you will still be unable to perfect it. It is good to know about it, though; once you learn about it you may become truly interested in it and not merely curious about it. Once you have a genuine desire to learn it, Nature will see that a teacher comes your way. Nature is never cruel. She always gives you what you want, provided you want it badly enough.

Until you do locate a teacher there are things you can do to prepare yourself, if you are willing to work at them sincerely. First you must utterly efface from your consciousness the idea that you and your partner are lovers, or husband and wife. You must treat each other as mother and son. Freud was so obsessed by the Oedipus complex because he never realized that sex was not the only form of union which can occur between two individuals. He assumed that all girls experience penis envy, when actually what they experience is the desire for Shiva's linga, which is the state of oneness, and when this desire is projected out into the body it becomes penis envy in the unenlightened individual. The effect of Freud's writings has been to make whoever reads them overly conscious of the body and, therefore, of sex. Sex is no doubt important, but it is only secondary. Freud tried to make it primary.

This is why I always say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Generations have now grown up studying Freud and learning wrong or imperfect knowledge because of his errors, convincing themselves that there is nothing to human interaction except sex. One reason why most Americans think they are satisfied with sex alone is that sensual love is all their parents learned. They never developed true, deep maternal love, and since only a pervert would have sex

with his or her child, that parent ends up loving the child very little. Such parents just don't know how to love their children, since they only know sexual love. American children grow up without any parental love and become so love-starved that they will take any affection they can get. Only a few are choosy. The rest just can't help themselves.

If you look at a voluptuous woman or a handsome man and see only the skeleton beneath the flesh, many benefits will accrue to you. You will communicate with a deeper layer of the individual, one closer to the center than the superficial flesh and skin which is that individual's Maya. Loving Maya always leads to misery; loving the skeleton at least enables you to project your love onto a form that will continue to exist even after death. It is certainly not the ultimate, but it is an improvement.

A male should look at every woman, especially his partner, and see Ma within her. A female should see all men and boys, and especially her partner, as her sons. This reduces the danger of falling unconsciously into sex, it teaches the couple something of parental love, and it leads to fidelity in the relationship.

Another thing: All desire for personal enjoyment or self-gratification has to be effaced from the mind. If you have even the slightest intention to take or gain something from your partner, that tiny desire can snowball when your nervous system is under full load, and an avalanche of energy can result, ending in sudden sex. You must forget how to take and learn only how to give. Does any real mother ever ask for anything from her child? No, nothing, not even love. And a child never need ask anything from a good mother because she will provide it without the child's asking, which allows the child to give his or her love freely. Shiva is known as the Great Giver. He has given up everything and sits alone in the smashan waiting for someone to love Him. You need to become like Shiva, sitting alone in the smashan of the world, if you ever hope to achieve at this sadhana.

These are just preliminaries, of course; but they are essential preliminaries, and worth working hard on if you want to obtain the benefits of this sadhana: good celibacy; fidelity to one partner because of longing, not legalities; the presence of Shiva and Shakti in your bodies as avishkara; and eventual samadhi of intense emotion.

AMRTA

One of the benefits of perfect brahmacharya is *amrta*. Amrta, which literally means "undying," is a secretion of the pineal gland. It is the true Fountain of Youth, because through amrta you can preserve

your youth almost permanently.

There are three important *rasas* (juices) in the world: *amra*, or *kama*, *rasa* (literally, "yearning juice"), which is mango juice; *charma rasa*, which is semen (literally, "skin juice"); and *bhakti,* or *rama, rasa*, which is amrta. Mango juice represents the epitome of nourishing food. It strengthens the body but is an aphrodisiac, nourishing the semen and encouraging it to move downward. Rama rasa becomes obtainable only when the semen (meaning the ojas, remember, not the sticky white fluid) is made to move upward, undisturbed. Semen, or ojas, is the pivot between the mundane world, the world of Kama, and the spiritual realm, the world of Rama. As they say, "Where there is Kama (lust), there is no Rama, and where there is Rama (divinity), there is no Kama."

It might seem logical that semen would be the best diet to increase ojas, but this is not so. I did meet a forty-year-old whore in France who looked a mere twenty-five, and she attributed it to drinking semen. There are side-effects, though. It makes you more prone to certain diseases, and, more importantly, it makes your *apana vayu* (the body's downward-moving force) move more powerfully downward, which will make you more and more sexually arousable. This is because semen is not ojas but merely the raw material from which ojas is produced. Those who drink semen and expect their ojas to increase will obtain only physical benefits, like that French whore did. It is not so easy to extract Shakti from Maya.

Celibacy gives you access to internal amrta, which must then be externalized if you want to use it to obtain physical immortality. But it is not necessary that the amrta come from your body for it to be effective on you. There are other sources you can tap. The easiest is to locate a girl who is just about to have the first menses of her life. An expert will be able to spot that moment when amrta will be available from the corners of her eyes. She will actually thank you when you remove it, because it will feel as if a tremendous weight has been removed from her body. That weight is a good part of her Shakti. By removing it you shorten her life span by up to ten years. Don't forget the Law of Karma. Of course, if you didn't remove it, she would probably waste it in masturbation or fornication anyway, but that doesn't exonerate you. And besides, unless you are an expert or know where to locate one, this method is of no use to you.

Or, you can procure an elephant. Do you know that this was the real reason kings were supposed to keep elephants? Most kings never knew. An elephant is not just for pomp and pageantry. If it is well cared for and becomes pleased with its master it can take amrta from its body and present it to its master. Today no one knows how to do this, save a few who tell no one.

Even if you are married, you can become immortal through amrta, though during the sadhana and forever afterward you must observe absolute brahmacharya, because amrta is a glandular substance. Whenever *kama agni*, the Fire of Lust, becomes enkindled in you it causes chemical changes which would consume this substance and nullify all the work you had done to obtain it. You will now ask, "Is it wise even to try to gain physical immortality?" Well, it depends on what you want to do. I never had that desire. I want to die out so that I can be free of all my earthly limitations. These are the facts I am presenting to you, and you have to decide what to do with them. You can use your amrta to create more ojas, you can use it to obtain immortality, you can do whatever you please with it. But first you have to obtain it.

And don't think it is not wonderful to be immortal; it is. Think of Chang Dev, the aghori who learned that he would only be able to meet his guru after 1,400 years. Now, in 1,400 years who knows what sort of incarnations you may have to take? What if you forget all about spirituality and miss your chance? So, Chang Dev deliberately remained alive for 1,400 years and then met his guru, Mukta Bai, the fourteen-year-old sister of Shri Jnaneshwar. Yogiraj Chang Dev used a different method than amrta, but the idea is the same.

Amrta is actually being produced continually in everyone's body, and continuously it drips down into the gut where it is incinerated by Jathara Agni, the fire of digestion. A yogi can trap this amrta and prevent it from being destroyed by practicing *Khechari Mudra*. The guru first tests the aspirant to determine whether or not he'll be able to succeed. If you pass this test, you then must practice *shirshasana*, the headstand, for several hours daily until you perfect it. Many people today are being misled by half-baked yoga teachers who tell them, "Do shirshasana, it sends plenty of blood to the brain"—bull! They prescribe the headstand to everyone without considering its uses and restrictions. For example, those who indulge in sex should never practice shirshasana lest they weaken themselves both physically and mentally; the brain and nerves will suffer. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

The real asanas are not physical anyway; they are mental. Can you even imagine what mental shirshasana must be like? If you can, you can do away with the need for the physical headstand altogether. But it is not so easy.

When your shirshasana becomes firm, your guru will begin to cut your frenulum lingua with a piece of rock salt; not a blade! He cuts only a tiny distance each day, and the salt prevents the cut surfaces from healing together. This is very delicate; if he cuts too far the student may never be able to speak again. This is not the modern idea

of taking a scalpel and swish! Straight through on the first go! Oh no! There is a reason for doing it gradually.

When the frenulum has been sufficiently cut, and the tongue can be retracted to cover the back of the mouth, the guru selects an auspicious day to begin Khechari Mudra. On that day you will be told to perform shirshasana and put your tongue completely backward into your mouth. Your guru will warn you that whenever you feel something dripping onto your tongue you should not swallow it but instead come down out of the posture and let the secretion flow from your mouth into your hand. This is amrta, which should be taken to your guru, who will put it into a special paan and only then make you eat it. This secretion needs to be consumed only thrice. After that your mind becomes steady, firm absolutely, which will make your meditation steady, no wavering of the mind to any side. Isn't that useful?

Amrta really can make you "undying," to the extent you follow the conditions. There are a lot of conditions, the main one being that you must never again enjoy sex or else the amrta will dissolve and within a short time your body will age completely.

It is the same with those amulets that some gurus implant into their disciples' arms or legs. These amulets have two important effects: You grow younger and younger as the years roll by, and you develop *Vak Siddhi*, which means that whatever you say comes true. When a guru gives such an amulet to a disciple two promises are extracted: total celibacy from then on and complete equanimity even in the face of severe provocation, because any curse you deliver will come true and will ruin both you and whoever you curse.

In the spiritual field, if you fall, you don't just have to stay and repeat a grade like you do in school. You will have to start all over again right from nursery school, which will take many lifetimes. To fool about with these things without knowing their gravity is terribly dangerous.

VAJROLI

There is another way to obtain amrta: the practice of *vajroli*. Anyone can learn vajroli, but for householders the prior practice of Shiva Lata Mudra is essential. So long as they are unable to control themselves this much, they will be unable to do vajroli.

To learn vajroli you must first thoroughly clean out your body: eyes, nose, mouth, stomach, and digestive tract. The upper body is cleaned by swallowing, churning, and regurgitating water. The bowel is washed by sucking water up through the anus into the colon, churning it, and expelling it. The urinary passage is cleansed by

sucking water through the penis into the bladder and through the ureters into the kidneys and then releasing it. This last process is called *gaja karma* because elephants (gaja) suck up water with their trunks and playfully spray themselves for a bath.

To be able to do this you must know the method of controlling apana vayu, the body force which causes the expulsion of urine, feces, flatus, semen, menses, and fetus. I can't tell you here how you can make apana, which naturally moves downward, go up, but consider this: If you want to urinate and you start to strain, the flow won't start; you must relax to start the stream. And in Ayurveda you are taught that if you clench your teeth tightly whenever you urinate or defecate then your teeth will always be firmly fixed in your skull and will always be healthy. How are the teeth and apana connected? Think about it.

Anyway, after you have been able to suck up water through the penis and hold a bladder full of water for three hours you proceed to use milk, to cool the genital organs. Then ghee, to lubricate. Honey next; it is very sticky, and hard to make flow upward. Finally, you do it with mercury, which is extremely heavy. You must use mercury that has been purified and prepared in the Tantric way; otherwise it is a deadly poison. When you can hold a bladder full of mercury for three hours without spilling a drop you have reached the level of the first qualification.

A woman prepares for vajroli in exactly the same way: She learns to suck up water, milk, and so on up to mercury, with her vagina. She reaches the level of the first qualification when she can hold a vagina full of mercury for three hours. You must have heard of the women of the Place Pigalle in Paris who can pick up one-franc coins from tables with their vaginas; I have seen this with my own eyes. And I am told that in Laos and Vietnam some bargirls can smoke cigarettes vaginally, so don't think that sucking mercury into the vagina is impossible. It's not; it's just hard work.[2] Mercury is central to Tantric alchemy. It has hundreds of uses but in this context we should note that it is the best preservative available. Half a handful of it is sufficient to preserve an entire silo of grain for a very long time. No insects or rodents dare venture near it; no fungus or mold can grow there. This was a common practice in ancient India.

When mercury is sucked up into the genitourinary tract its main effects are on the prostate in men and on various glands including Bartholin's glands in women. It causes these glands to contract. A well-contracted prostate will not enlarge in old age. Also, when these glands are contracted their secretions will not flow so easily, which provides some control over the sexual response. The outstanding characteristic of prostate fluid is that it propagates life; we know this

because sperm need it to stay alive. The fluid from a female's glands is called *stri shukra* (female semen) in Ayurveda, meaning that it should be preserved by a woman as carefully as a man preserves his semen.

A man who practices vajroli on a woman sucks up with his penis the secretions which ooze out as she gets excited. These oozings further contract the prostate; in fact, they cause to be produced a new type of cell which mediates prostate function. The woman used for this purpose loses ten years of her life span, though, since such a great amount of her Shakti is removed. Of course, a woman who knows vajroli can "milk" an unsuspecting man of his semen with her suction. She can make him eject over and over again until there is nothing left to eject, which will sap him of all his ojas. Her glands will be well benefited by this, at his expense.

If you want to practice this technique you need a body which is in good shape. For the first twenty-three years of my life I didn't know what salt was, and I had never experienced sex. Westerners eat salt excessively all their lives, and they are introduced to the opposite sex very early. Western men who waste their semen even once every three days will suffer for it; their resistance will decline, and their nerves will be affected. This makes knowledge of vajroli all the more important. A man who knows real vajroli should be able to satisfy dozens of females in a single night, providing each female with at least ten orgasms, without letting even a drop of prostate fluid fall, and once he is finished he should be able to calmly wash his hands and smoke a cigarette.

Don't forget, though, that the Law of Karma is very queer. You can get yourself into trouble even if you know vajroli. I know, it happened to me. I had been going along merrily performing a little vajroli on so many girls. A little only, because if I had done the full thing they would have been bleeding and in bed for months because they knew nothing of the technique. Besides, it would have shortened their lives, and I wanted to avoid that karma.

One day I met a very powerful being—a Mahapurusha, actually—who said to me, "So, you've become a beef-eater, eh?"

I didn't like the way he sneered that and got wild. "I have never eaten even a mouthful of beef in my entire life. How dare you call me a beef-eater!"

He replied, "When you do vajroli with beef-eating girls, isn't that the same thing as eating it yourself?"

I had to pull my ears at that one; he was right. When you suck up vaginal secretions you take an immense amount of Shakti, and the body's Shakti is composed of the essence of the food consumed. I had been eating beef that way. The Mahapurusha made me purify myself. My God! It was rough. After that I paid more attention to my partners

and finally quit altogether. The Law of Karma is really tough. I've made mistakes, no doubt; I'm not infallible, as many see the Pope. But I've always confessed to my mistakes, and Nature has always pardoned me. I cannot describe to you the awesome magnanimity of Nature; it is amazing!

Control is all in the mind. Physical control, like pinching the penis at the moment of orgasm, is most crude. There are other methods. If you prepare mercury in a certain way and fill your navel with it, you can copulate for days on end and never spill even a drop of prostate fluid. But this is also unsatisfactory because it is an external method; once you lose your mercury you are through. Mental control is both more refined and more efficient.

Now, the applications of vajroli: Modern scientists claim that only the head of the spermatozoon yields the progeny, but actually millions of beings can be produced from each of the millions of spermatozoa present in each drop of semen. This is how Shukracharya, the guru of the *asuras* (power-seeking deities), could resuscitate all the asura troops killed in the wars with the devas (India's Vedic and Puranic gods). That is why he was called Shukracharya ("Semen-Teacher").

At the other end of the pole from the asuras are the rishis, who believed in family planning. A rishi would have one child in twelve years, or even less frequently, but he would enjoy regular and vigorous intercourse with his wife, thanks to vajroli. Once he and his wife did decide to have a child they would first decide on its sex, and then on its category: grammarian, musician, mathematician, saint, or whatever. They would then construct a good horoscope for the proposed child to be born under, selecting planetary positions according to the type of child desired. Some of this information as to what sort of child will be conceived when you copulate on a certain lunar day in a certain position has been preserved on the walls of our temples, such as the Sun Temple at Konark in Orissa.

The rishis knew much more than this, though. They knew all about the subtle or ethereal planets which exist along with the gross planets we can see. When the time came for the rishi and his mate to perform coitus they would first perform all eighty-four of the postures designed especially for intercourse, using vajroli. Then, at the precise moment they had chosen, on the right lunar day with the correct lunar asterism predominating to maximize the child's attributes, the rishi would discharge his semen, which would go directly to the cervix—no waiting in the vagina. The rishi would be accurate to the last second, because four minutes of time means a difference of one degree of celestial arc. The couple would have the best of all factors: proper mood, hypersecretion, full excitement, exact moment. The ecstasy would be so great that it would permeate the zygote thus conceived

and would produce optimal samskaras.[3] A rishi can control his own samskaras, of course, and can juggle them to create new genes if he so desires. Let Western scientists discover the twenty-fourth chromosome and then they may understand a little more of the mystery of life—a little.

You see, by this method of knowing what the child will become even before it is conceived you know exactly what to do with the child as he or she grows up. Isn't this a better way than coupling haphazardly like animals and producing brats? This is why I say that the rishis knew about creation and today's human beings know only about procreation. Rishis have upward-moving semen, of course, and do not need to copulate to have children. Originally, they did it by force of will alone. A rishi would look at a woman with such intense affection that she would become pregnant. Later it was done in other ways, including via mantra. Rishis can also create thousands of beings just by wiping the sweat off their foreheads. As humans forgot these ways, the business of having children became degraded, and humans began to breed like animals do, joining penis with vagina.

Another reason a man should know vajroli is that women are said to be nine times more passionate than men. Only when his wife is satiated has a man fulfilled his duty to her. He must ask her ten times, or even more, "Are you finished? Have you had enough?" But a man's ego is hurt to ask because he knows his wife may not find him satisfactory. So, 99.99% of men never ask, and their wives are never fully satisfied.

Moreover, most men have no idea of female anatomy. Women's orgasms come in waves, while a man's is only one. A man has to last as long as he can after penetration before ejaculation. The immature man goes off quickly, and the man with a little knowledge lasts a few minutes at most. This is not at all sufficient to satisfy the female, and since almost all people are interested only in physical sex, there is misery.

Consider this Sanskrit proverb: *Bhoge na bhogata, bhogam iva bhogata*. This means that the enjoyment of pleasure lies not in the act of enjoyment but in the fact of enjoyment. Human beings have become very selfish. They want to enjoy their own orgasms and can't be bothered about their partners'. This attitude will never satisfy you, though. You can only get true satisfaction from sex when you have become more interested in your partner's satiation than in your own, because only then will your partner reciprocate fully, freely, and enthusiastically and do his or her best to satisfy you. That joy of having another being trying to satisfy you is far greater than the pleasure of the orgasm itself. This is the meaning of that proverb.

The real bliss of sex occurs when the male is able to steer his mate

into a condition of absolute sexual frenzy. In order to do this the male must know each erotic center in his partner's body, and he must know the relationship between the erotic centers and the moon. The moon plays a very important role in each woman's life. Menstruation is derived from a word meaning "moon" since it occurs at intervals of one lunar month. In the past, women's menstrual cycles were much more regular than they are now; everything was more natural.

A different erotic center in the female body is awakened on each lunar day. If the male concentrates his passion on that center, the female's passion will ignite very quickly, and the resulting orgasms will be far more intense. Finger action should be sufficient to cause a female to have ten oozings, if you know which center is proper for which lunar day. The male should cooperate with the female's body so there is no need to struggle to arouse her. This way the arousal happens automatically. It should be intuitive, yes, but intuition alone is insufficient. Knowledge of the woman's body is also required.

Do you know how many erotic centers are present in the buttocks alone? Here, I'll give you a practical demonstration on this handy teenage girl. Now, when I press here do you see the result? And that is just one finger. Look, I'll add one more finger. You see, she can't stand it, she has to break away because the excitement is too much. If I continue she will start to ooze, and if I do it with concentration she should have one hundred oozings from finger pressure alone, all because I am pressing the center which is most active today.

Shiva plays Shakti like an instrument; humans should follow His lead. The erotic centers are the keys of the instrument. The male must know which key to press and when. Does the instrument ever complain about being controlled by the musician and demand to be allowed to play him occasionally? No, it's absurd. But this does not devalue Shakti in any way. Without an instrument or a voice no musician can make music. Both are essential; neither can work alone. It just so happens that the instrument must be controlled, and the musician must control; this is Nature's way. If you can think of any other way, please let me know about it. I will worship your lotus feet as my guru for teaching me something new.

And remember, control is possible only when you learn how to give and forget how to take. Today's men not only do not know how to satiate a woman sexually, they are not interested in doing so. They only want to emit their teaspoonful of semen and relax. This is why men can no longer control women.

When someone accepts a gift from you, you have successfully inserted an element of control into your relationship with that individual. Your choice of gift and time of giving can influence events then and in the future. To take, you must come under someone else's

influence to create the opportunity for your taking to occur. This is why Shiva is the Great Giver. He never takes anything from anyone, so He is eternally free from the influence of Maya. Can a musician take music from his instrument? No, he must give his experience, his expertise to the instrument, and then the instrument will automatically produce the music. In fact, a musician really has only a foggy idea of how instruments make music, unless he is only an artisan and not an artist. A real musician becomes so engrossed by his music that he is amazed when it finally comes forth from within him. The musician gives his all to the instrument, and, inspired by this gift, the instrument gives its all to the musician. It is a mutual thing.

Isn't it wonderful?

The human body is a much better instrument than any musical instrument ever created because it can be played in so many ways. All parts of the body have erotic significance, especially the ear lobes, navel, buttocks, and lips. In the old days, you know, there was no such thing as kissing, which began only in Kali Yuga. In Kali Yuga the mouth has assumed great importance because we get much of our prana through food and we know how to communicate only in oral speech.

In the past people smelled one another. Elders would embrace children by smelling their heads. Lovers would embrace each other and take in each other's body odors. Smell pertains to the Earth Element, the most gross, physical element. Sniffing inflames the passions of those who want to enjoy coitus. All the senses are important: taste for kissing; touch for caressing; hearing, verbal and nonverbal. Sight is the most important because it permits a direct telepathic communication between the two. They can go beyond words and feelings.

The senses provide different instruments to the conductor or composer to create the symphony. The asanas are musical tunes and phrases. Our texts on sex describe eighty-four important positions for copulation. Each position affects a different group of erotic centers, like a different pattern of musical notes, and each position, therefore, has a unique orgasmic effect. An expert will perform all eighty-four postures in three hours with the use of vajroli to inflame his or her partner so thoroughly that no sex desire will arise again for months. There is no need; he or she is too full.

I know I said that the female should under no circumstances climb on top of the male. I stand by this statement as far as sex between ordinary people is concerned, but the situation is different, vastly different, when two people know vajroli. Then it becomes a friendly competition. I start off with one posture and try to take her off guard and overwhelm her with the sensation. She will respond by changing

my posture into a slightly different one, trying to get the upper hand. A rhythm of its own develops, a musical melody, and both of us begin to dance while we are still making love. There's nothing like it; you just can't imagine the feeling.

Suppose she tries to maneuver herself on top of me. If she succeeds she will gloat: "Ha, what sort of Shiva are you? Now I will be in control." I can't allow that, so as soon as she comes on top I will suddenly, effortlessly, and gracefully transform that posture into one in which I am in command. Then I can tell her, "You dare not try to control me; I am your controller!" And as I speak those words she will be converting that posture into another one more favorable to her.

When both partners have full knowledge of vajroli there is mutual benefit. She releases a little of her secretion to him, just enough to lubricate his prostate; he releases just enough of his prostate fluid to rejuvenate her. Only if they want a child does he emit semen, and only then does she permit it to enter the cervix. A fair exchange is no robbery. This is important from the karmic point of view, because if you suck up all the secretions from all your partners and take years off their lives, you are to blame for their misery and will have to pay them back someday.

Vajroli is not a joke. A man who uses full force vajroli on an ordinary woman will cause her to bleed. She may even lose control over her sphincters and soil the bed. It can cause complete revulsion for sex, or it can create nymphomania. When a woman who knows vajroli 'milks' a man of his semen, he discharges and discharges until he is empty and still must discharge. The tension becomes so great he cannot bear it. So, this knowledge is not to be toyed with, lest you ruin yourself and others with you. When both partners know vajroli, though, well, there is nothing like it in the world. You'll forget all about sex except with that partner.

Vajroli is only the beginning. After vajroli there are *rajjoli*, *sahajoli*, *amaroli* and *gaupya*—but no one knows about gaupya except Lord Shiva Himself. These techniques are very difficult to describe in words and can be practiced only when the two partners can leave their bodies at will. The Vedantins talk about *atma krida, atma ratih, atma maithunam*, meaning "the love play, eroticism, and sexual union of the Universal Soul", but they don't understand the true meaning of it. What happens is that the male must enter the female's body with his subtle body, and vice versa. Then the man will be able to feel the spasms his mate undergoes as each erogenous zone is ignited, and she can do the same thing in his body. They both thoroughly enjoy each other's play before the final coitus occurs.

Vajroli is a mutual clashing, interaction, and union of two personalities into one. Shiva and Shakti merge together into

Sadashiva; the proton and the electron reunite to form the neutron. Just as in physics such a union is associated with tremendous energy, the union of vajroli is associated with awesome Shakti, which can be used for great spiritual advancements. It is the achievement of a lifetime.

Both partners must be thoroughly prepared for vajroli, but preparation of the female is more important since females are naturally more passionate. A female can go into samadhi through this practice only when she forgets her body totally. If she retains even a slight interest in sex the intensity of vajroli will magnify it so much that she will drag her man down and make him again conscious of his physical body. Or, if the man's willpower is strong enough to prevent this, nothing will happen to him, but she will develop a ravenous appetite for sex. This is why it is essential that you perfect Shiva Lata Mudra while you are learning to suck up water and all the rest with the genitals. Both partners must forget their sexuality entirely and their physical bodies as much as possible and self-identify totally with Bhairava and His Bhairavi.

There is no comparison between vajroli and ordinary sex. Vajroli has nothing to do with friction and irritation. It actually creates harmony, because the movements are not random; they follow a definite set pattern. Also, the male never emits semen and the female does not ooze continuously, so neither partner's aura is dissipated. In fact the two partners mutually increase each other's auras by the effort at sadhana.

You can even take your Bhairavi into the smashan if you like and perform Shiva Lata Mudra or vajroli with her there. Certain ethereal beings will be so irritated by your audacity that they will come and try to unnerve you. But never permit yourself to fear. You can gain control of yakshinis in this way. But—and this is a very big but—if your Bhairavi is not absolutely firm mentally then her mind will be dragged down into her body, and you will be dragged down along with her. And then you are done for. But if you can do it, it is the best possible sex, even better than copulating with a yakshini after calling her into a corpse. This is why I say over and over and over again: If you want to do this sadhana you must have a superpartner, otherwise you'll never be able to succeed and both of you will be ruined. I was very lucky that my Bhairavi was so expert—or perhaps I was just destined for it. If you cannot find a perfect partner, it is better either to forget all about doing this sadhana or wait until you can locate an expert.

BHAIRAVI

Thus the question arises: Where can you locate a Bhairava or Bhairavi and, if you are accepted as a pupil, learn these techniques? Well, nowhere except in India. Even here, only a handful know vajroli. I do not teach everyone who comes to me because I can't be sure they will not try to commercialize what they learn. I once taught a fellow to suck up water with the penis and what did he do? He went to Germany and became a big so-called swami. When I met him afterwards, he became very uneasy and said to me, "I hope you won't let on …"

I replied, "Don't worry, babu, your secret is safe with me." Why expose him? Give him enough rope and he will hang himself eventually; why should I interfere? After that experience, though, I have become quite selective. In fact, I have not yet found a worthy pupil.

Of course, I was not myself a worthy pupil in the beginning. Once, just shortly after Smashan Tara came to me, I saw a woman pass me in the street. What a beauty! I was for a moment overcome with lust. Then I heard Ma telling me, "Control yourself. Remember that she is mortal. She will get old and wrinkled one day, and then she will die and her beautiful body will decompose. Only her bones will remain. When you look at her, see her not as she is now but as she will be eventually: a skeleton.''

From that day forth, I forgot to look at people as they presently exist and started to try to look at all of them as skeletons, especially the pretty women, so that I could control my lust. It took me six years to make a thorough job of it. No, the only way to learn vajroli is to have an experienced partner who can make up for any deficiencies you might have. I think my partner, the Bhairavi who taught me, is the most experienced Bhairavi in India, which means in the world. As far as sex is concerned, there is no one to beat her. When she came to me she looked like a fifteen-year-old girl, but she is much, much older than that. Death cannot come to take her until she herself desires it. She remains naked, but covers herself with her long matted locks, and she carries a trident, Shiva's symbol.

Once I playfully asked her, "Why don't you let me see your real form?" She showed me—and my God! It was horrible! I was nauseated by the sight. All her skin was wrinkled; her eyelids drooped down onto her cheeks, and she had to pick them up with her fingers in order to see me. She has become immortal through the use of mercury. Take one of her hairs and put it into a furnace of one thousand degrees Celsius for one month and nothing whatsoever will happen to it. *That* is the power of mercury: the power of preservation.

And the way she taught me; none to beat her. I learned all the connections between the erogenous zones and the lunar days. She

would use her mouth to demonstrate how her labia would look at each point in the process. Sometimes I would laugh at the way she would make faces, and she would get wild with me: “You old man, what do you know?” Imagine, she would call me “old man” even though I was a baby compared to her.

In the early days when I knew nothing she guided me carefully. When I would become fatigued after hours of vajroli and postures, she would make me drink hot milk which had been medicated with mercury in a special way, and then I would be back to my old self, fighting fit. If my erection began to droop, all she had to do was touch a certain nerve and woop! I would again become fully erect.

When she wanted to test my progress she would tighten her vaginal muscles and then tell me to penetrate her. My God! It was absolutely impossible; she could make her vagina as hard as wood. Once I must have become somewhat frivolous, and to teach me a lesson she let me penetrate her and then clamped down with her vaginal muscles. I thought my penis would be squeezed flat! Then she actually began to lift my body, gripping me by my penis with her vagina! And mind you, I weighed 210 pounds at that time. It felt as if my entire pubic region was being ripped from my body! She’s too good, that’s all I can say.

I got my Bhairavi thanks to Shyamananda Aghori. It happened like this: I was on a university trip to Hardwar with some of my friends. A little away from the city was an old smashan in which no one was able to spend a single night alone; everyone who tried died. I don’t know what happened to my friends—perhaps something or someone affected their minds—but they dared me to spend a whole night there alone. I have never been able to ignore a challenge, so I agreed. I loaded up two hip flasks with whiskey, packed some snacks, and took my trusty Colt revolver. I was fond of hunting back then, and I had decided that some wild animal must be killing everyone who tried to spend the night there. My plan was to shoot it down, using myself as bait to attract it, and stop those stories once and for all.

Night had fallen by the time I reached the place. There was an immense stone image of Ma, and I could see that it would be the ideal place from which to get a bead on my adversary, whatever it might be. I settled down in between Her lotus feet and noticed one of the skulls that lay nearby. It was unusually broad, something you think of in terms of prehistoric man and it was bleached absolutely white. I was sure it would crumble to powder when I touched it but, no, it was quite solid.

I began to eat and drink and sat fiddling with the safety catch on my revolver. As the night deepened and the hours rolled by I started to think the whole thing was just a hoax, when suddenly I heard a

rustling from the vegetation near the temple. My senses had been sharpened by plenty of hunting. “Aha,” I said to myself, “it is a wild animal, and I’m going to get myself a nice trophy from tonight’s adventure.” At that time in my life I was completely wild because of doing so much Smashan Sadhana, and I believed in only one thing: Kill or be killed. The blood lust had taken hold of me that night, with a good deal of help from the whiskey, and I sat waiting for the blighter to come into view.

After a bit I heard a low growl, which gradually came closer and closer, and before long I could see two eyes like burning coals and I knew it was a tiger. I thought to myself, “It’s all very clear now. This fellow has become a man-eater. A simple explanation for the whole mystery of this place.” I was just waiting for him to come into range since a revolver is only useful at close quarters, and you must get a clean shot at a tiger to drop him. If you don’t drop him with the first shot, you may not live to regret it. I planned to shoot him right between the eyes, and the whole matter would be finished.

Closer and closer he came, and I was becoming more and more excited: When will he come into range, so I can shoot him! I lifted the revolver and aimed it; just as he came within about thirty yards of me I decided to pull the trigger—and my hand became useless. I just couldn’t move it. In that instant all my confidence deserted me. I suddenly realized that I would be killed by the tiger like all the rest. It was such a shock that I passed out.

When I awoke I was most surprised to be alive. The tiger was gone and in his place was an aghori standing over me. I looked at him rather stupidly, I suppose, because he said, “Get up! Don’t worry, I’m not a tiger to eat you up! I called you here; that’s why you’ve come.” He told me to go down to the river and take a bath, and then he explained to me that I would have to come to the smashan every night and perform a certain sadhana known as Sahasra Munda (Thousand Skulls). There was an immense heap of skulls nearby, of the prehistoric type I had seen earlier, which is why the place was called Munda Durga (Fortress of Skulls). With Shyamanandaji’s help I succeeded at that sadhana. As he said, “Anyone who wants to be an aghori must do Munda Sadhana.” The only thing is, most do Munda Sadhana with five skulls; I did it with over one thousand.

After I completed that sadhana he told me, “Now I am going to give you my Bhairavi.” That’s how I got her, and, oh my, what she has taught me! I don’t think any other woman in the universe could have taught me so much.

Once my Guru Maharaj wanted me to accompany him to a certain locality near Nasik, but I flatly refused. I told him, “My Bhairavi is there, and if I go to meet her, I will never return; I will remain with

her forever because she will never allow me to leave. She will feed me mercury so that I can regain my youth and then we will practice mudras together indefinitely. I will forget about everything else in the world, including you, so please do not insist." He got wild, but I was adamant.

My relationship with my Bhairavi was such that I never wanted to leave her. I did not leave her willingly, in fact; I was forced to. I was ordered to return to the world and continue my work here. But even though we have been separated for many years now, I have not forgotten her, and I will never forget her. No other female has ever been able to satisfy me even one percent as much as she could, and I doubt I'll ever find any woman who could. Sexual satisfaction is the least she gave me, of course; our relationship was very different. A purely physical relationship can only be temporary; a merely mental relationship lasts not much longer, perhaps an entire lifetime. A spiritual relationship, though, is permanent, eternal, and that is all I value.

When I last visited America, I talked to some Americans about ojas and vajroli. I know that Americans are obsessed with sex and I wanted to try to impress upon them how little they really know about the subject. And I wanted to test them.

In this lifetime it is unlikely that any of them will locate a Bhairava or Bhairavi, so it will be impossible for them to learn vajroli, or even Shiva Lata Mudra. I told them as much, in fact, just to see how they would react. Some of them had the attitude, "Well, this is very nice but it is not at all practical, so we really cannot spend any time on it." Some of them, I am sure, though no one admitted it to me, went directly home and tried out Lata Mudra and found out that it was indeed impossible to do without guidance. There might possibly be even one or two who would try the Mudra or vajroli out with several partners and then convince themselves that they had achieved. They might even start to go around and hold seminars to teach others the half-baked knowledge they imagined they had learned. I know there are plenty of 'Tantric experts' in America doing this sort of thing, so it would not surprise me at all if someone tried to misuse this information.

I would have been happy if even one had had this attitude: "It seems unlikely that I will be able to learn this technique this time around but compared to it, ordinary sex is nothing! I am going to make an honest effort to worship my deity in this life with the sincere intention that next time around or sometime later in the future, Nature will teach me what I want to learn."

This is the correct attitude. No effort is ever wasted. What you do not complete in this lifetime you will most certainly complete later if

you have a real desire to do so. The progression will be maintained, regardless of time. Time is no barrier at all. But if you are in a hurry for knowledge, you will never obtain it. In my opinion, the best things in life are worth waiting for no matter how long that wait might be. This is why an aghori loses his fear of death. He knows that even if he dies with something unfinished, Nature will be obligated to create the conditions for him to finish his sadhana in the future. Where will Nature go?

I don't mean you should sit back and relax and say to yourself, "Why do any work now since there is no hope for success in this birth? I'll wait until I am born in the appropriate situation and then I'll see about doing penance." With this attitude, which many self-proclaimed "good Hindus" suffer from, you will never succeed even after millions of births.

Besides, you don't know your destiny; who knows what you are destined to achieve in this birth? An aghori demands success now knowing full well that if it eludes him in this lifetime, he will be able to continue later. He never slackens, though. Slackening shows the presence of residual traces of Maya in the personality: "Let me have one more little enjoyment and then I will renounce." NO! If you want to enjoy, enjoy; if you are through with enjoyment, tired of the world's deceptions, then renounce. Don't try to mix enjoyment and renunciation together; it just won't work. And once you renounce, be prepared to wait.

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[1] Mandan Mishra's wife's name was Ubhaya Bharati. "Bharati" can mean "speech" or "eloquence" and is one of the names of Sarasvati, goddess of speech. "Ubhaya" means "both", and we can but speculate which two "voices", or forms of Sarasvati, she may have embodied.

[2] The bargirls presumably exercised with stones; you can discover more by searching the Internet for "jade eggs" or "yoni eggs". Similarly, men can dangle weights from their own genitals to strengthen their abilities in this regard.

[3] *Samskara,* a word with many meanings, here represents "desirable innate traits".

CHAPTER TEN

DEVOTION

It is always better to live with reality,
because if you don't,
reality will come to live with you.

MY ANIMALS

THERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT WAYS in which animals differ from humans. First, they can't know their parents. In the mating season a male will catch hold of any available female, even if she is his mother, sister, or daughter. Second, animals can do japa—my little doggie does wonderful japa—but since they have no hands they cannot perform rituals. Third, since an animal does not know its parents, it can't do Pitr Tarpana to placate its ancestors, so there is no progression in that respect. Humans pay attention to kinship and can perform ritual worship and Pitr Tarpana. Any human who does not do these things is no better than an animal; worse, in fact, because it is a waste of a precious human rebirth which is fantastically diffi cult to obtain; how diffi cult, you have no idea. And today no one bothers, which makes most humans animals. It is by living with animals that I've learned how to handle humans. I have never feared the animals in the jungles. Animals can understand everything you think—telepathically. If they sense fear, they will think you are going to attack them and since attack is the best form of defense, they will attack you first. But if you show them that you want to be friendly, it's very easy to make them love you—if you are brave enough. Animals will never harm you unless you deliberately provoke them.

In fact, sometimes even if you provoke them they will not harm you. Once in Girnar I was being troubled by a bee flying near me and buzzing in my ear. Two or three times I tried to brush it away, but it came back each time. Finally, I told it, "If you don't leave me alone, I'm going to have to kill you." No response. I lifted my hand to smack it as it sat on a nearby stone. Down came my hand onto the empty

stone; the bee had moved to one side. Each time I tried to hit it the bee would move to one side. It didn't fly away, it didn't try to sting me.

Eventually I remembered Guru Dattatreya and his twenty-four gurus, and it began to dawn on me that this might not be an ordinary insect. I decided to inspect it a little more closely, and when I did I saw it rubbing its two front feet together. Suddenly I thought—or the thought was introduced into my mind, I don't know which—"You have to wash your own hands of karma in the same way." Was that bee not a guru to me?

I learned quite a bit from that little bee. Once, some years later, I had an argument with a lady with regard to her insensitivity to pain and suffering in animals. About half an hour later she went to take a bath, and a cockroach began to trouble her. It ran up her leg to a certain secret place causing her to throw the soap up into the air; then it ran onto her leg again. She picked up her slipper to strike it and ended in striking several sharp blows to her foot, arm, and leg as the cockroach evaded her. Every so often it would drop off and run to one side and cock its antennae and stare up at her, and then the fun would start all over again. No, I've always gotten along well with animals. I kept a cockroach as a pet once. I called him Ramji and kept him in a matchbox. Unfortunately, he was accidentally sprayed one day and passed away.

In my own home I used to have a small menagerie, which included at various times a chimpanzee and an orangutan. I even had a crocodile there for a while. His name was Gopaldas. I had to send him to the Bombay Zoo after he chewed off the cook's leg. It was the cook's fault; he was trying to cause some trouble for me. I think Gopaldas must have sensed it. Anyway, it was too dangerous to keep him at home. I used to visit him often at the zoo. I'd walk over to the crocodile pen and call out "Gopaldas!", and he would amble over to me and open his big mouth wide, and I'd put some food into it.

For the longest time, whenever I had a good day at the races and was flush with money I used to go down to Crawford Market in South Bombay and purchase all the doves, pigeons, and other fowl meant for the pot and release them—just let them fly away so they could enjoy their freedom. I had enjoyed that kind of freedom as a sadhu, and I knew what it was like to be caged up. After a while I realized I might be interfering too much in karma, and I quit. But I will never forget those years in the jungle when I had only animals for friends, and I will always love them more than I'll love humans.

My animals have always loved me. The little Pekingese dog I have now will not eat or drink when I am out of town; she must be forcefed. I think my animals are better than humans. Remember,

human love today is nothing but lust resulting from rnanubandhana. Human beings will always fail you, but animals have a selfless love. They don't have any sense of "I am doing this or that"; they only do what their nature tells them to do. When they want to eat they eat, when they want to sleep they sleep, and when they want to love you they will do it wholeheartedly.

I have become very wary of humans. When you do something nice for a spirit or an animal they will never forget it. They will love you forever afterward. But do one good thing for a human being and all you will get is a request for something more to be done. There is no end to human greed.

This is why I always like to have animals near me. There are always new things to learn from them. Have you noticed what happens when you spell the word God backwards? You get dog. I would love to become just like a dog, because of all creatures, dogs are the most loving and the most devoted. Is there any animal more faithful than man's best friend? And a dog's love is pure and unselfish. Even if you don't feed him, still he will greet you with love. A cat would never do that. And a dog has only one master; it will never obey any other. This is the way in which you should worship God. Select one form of God to worship and then worship only that form. No matter what happens, what difficulties you may get into, be tenacious. Never lose faith. If you behave just as if you were God's dog, then you are sure to achieve. Sometime back I read in the papers about a dog whose master left him at an airport in Russia seven years before. Every day that dog meets every plane that lands, waiting for his master to come back and retrieve him. He is fed by the workers at the airport but refuses to go home with any of them. If you can develop that sort of devotion for God, then you will not have to wait long before He comes to you. If you crave to see Him, He has to come! Where will He go? He is not a heartless brute like the owner of that Russian dog. But you must have that perfect selfless devotion if you want to drag God to you. That is why I always keep a dog around me, so that some of the dog's personality will rub off on me. I am devoted to my doggie Lizoo, my Pekingese. I would give up everyone else in the world but her, just like Yudhishthira, who refused to go to heaven unless his dog was allowed to accompany him.

DEVOTION

If I live for anything, I live for my sadhana. And I cannot emphasize too strongly that to succeed at sadhana you must do whatever you set out to do with heart and soul. Never be like a prostitute, going from guru to guru, deity to deity, never selecting one

as a true lover. Be like the *chataka* bird, that drinks water only when the Swati asterism is in the sky. Never be happy anywhere but where your beloved is, whatever you may choose to love. Then you can get siddhi—not otherwise.

Even when I was engaged to my wife, I would invariably get up at 10 p.m. no matter what I was doing and would go to the smashan. She would ask me, "What do you do when you leave here?" One day I decided to take her along with me; why keep secrets from anyone? I drove to the smashan and parked the car. "Listen, while I am doing my sadhana I will not be able to come and help you out. You'll have to wait until dawn. Think it over." She said, "I'll wait in the car until you finish." I shrugged my shoulders, walked over to a blazing pyre, sat down, and began my rituals.

At dawn I returned to the car to find she had fainted. Foam was coming from her mouth, and her skin was cold. A nice slap brought her to her senses, and she started mumbling deliriously, "No, no, don't come near me. Take me home." I took her home, and she was in bed for a month with high fever from the fright of it. What did she see there? No one knows. And still she married me. This is rnanubandhana.

My wife says I'm a fool. Hundreds come to me to be treated and get their work done, and she says I'm a fool because I don't cash in on my abilities! It doesn't matter. Although we can't get along together, still I refer to her and respect her as my first guru, because if it hadn't been for her nagging I would never have rushed up things like I did; a blitzkrieg, if you like. She wanted me to become completely materialistic because she married me for my money; but it was not possible. If that had happened, we would not be talking together here today. Therefore, I thank her for making me realize the futility of life. You see, I have an aghori's frame of mind: Challenge and response. Either I die, or I succeed; either I kill you or you kill me. I picked this up in the jungle as a sadhu, and when I was a wrestler. That competitiveness has always been there.

Once when I had gone to see my Junior Guru Maharaj after a long interval, I went to the cave I kept nearby and found some other aghori sitting in it. I got wild. The beauty of that cave is that no one ever sits there when I am gone, but inside it is always spotless as if it were being regularly cleaned. It is full of whitened skulls, and snakes drip off the ceiling. Many of my friends have seen it, and they have all become frightened. There is a tree outside which gives a different type of fruit in each month of the year. You can obtain one fruit from it each day, and with the cool water from the spring within the cave you can live splendidly.

I told the other aghori, whose name was Bhutanath, "Look, this is

my cave. If you want to remain alive, you had better pack up and leave immediately."

He started to bluster: "This may have been your cave but now it belongs to me. If you don't like it, I don't care. Get out!" What arrogance! This was serious. I told him, "I am warning you for the last time. I have nothing against you, but I can't be responsible for what my friends will do to you if you stay here any longer."

He just continued to blather: "Do you want to see what I can do? If you don't leave now, I will kill you."

Unfortunately for him, the moment he spoke these words he vomited blood and died. I buried his body; who will waste money for wood to cremate him? About some things it is necessary to be very strict.

But you can't punish just anyone who makes fun of you; only those who should know better like Bhutanath. Besides, to punish someone is also to create a new karma, even if that someone deserved it like Bhutanath did. Every action produces an equal and opposite reaction: Newton's Third Law of Motion. Eventually you will have to pay for each and every karma you create unless you find someone who is willing to take some of your karmas away from you and endure them himself, which is quite unlikely.

A sadhu has his own karmas to worry about, and only rarely will he take anyone else's karmas to reduce that person's sufferings. I have tried it, and I have suffered for overstepping my limits. I took the karmas of one fellow suffering from throat cancer just to spare his children from being fatherless. For forty days I couldn't even drink water. I survived on sips of lime juice mixed in a glass of soda.

Now I know what cancer is like. You see, if the patient will have to suffer for six years, you can suffer yourself for six months or six days, depending on the strength of your penance, because the austerities make the reaction easier to bear. But suffer you must.

Usually, however, a sadhu will say, "You have performed the action and enjoyed the fruit at the time. Now you are enjoying the reaction. Please learn a good lesson from it and don't make any mistakes again." You may find fakirs to help you, because they are more emotional, but only a few sadhus are exceptions to this rule.

I know the truth of this story personally. There was once a girl who married and was happily living in Bombay when she developed leprosy. Her husband and his family threw her out of the house, and her own family refused to take her in. In despair she went to Girnar. In the jungle she found a sadhu sitting on his dhuni. When he saw her, he grunted at her several times, but she still refused to move. Finally, he had to say, "Ma, please do leave here. The sun is about to go down, and it is very dangerous to be out in the jungle at night."

She replied, “I have come to Girnar to find some baba who will cure me. Until now all the sadhus and fakirs I have met could do nothing, and if you also can’t do anything, I have decided to kill myself because I cannot stand it any longer.”

The sadhu didn’t say anything after that, and he continued to sit by his dhuni, she sitting nearby. Night fell and the cold set in and she started to shiver, but she didn’t move. At about 3 a.m. the sadhu got up to have his bath. When he came back he smeared himself with ash from his dhuni, sat on the ground, called the girl over to him, and motioned to her to sit on his lap. Then he embraced her—and she became free of the disease instantaneously. I can take you to her today; she is a grandmother now. Her husband and everyone else had to admit that she was cured. And the sadhu? Well, he had to suffer terribly for forty days, agony. That sort of compassion you find in only one out of thousands of sadhus and fakirs.

A householder aghori cannot afford to be cruel. He has his own obligations, his people to protect and provide for, and he must be compassionate. To wear ochre robes is really a terrible responsibility and that is why I don’t wear them. While I don’t, I am a normal human being and I can play about as I like. I can enjoy my life and make mistakes. But when I put that on, I can’t afford to make even a single mistake.

This is another reason why I continuously test the people who come to me to learn something of spirituality. Some of them think they are ready to go out into the jungle without any preparation whatsoever. But do they realize what it means to divorce yourself from all your comforts and live like a sadhu? Once I met a sadhu in a North Indian forest. He was an Englishman, but he had already spent twenty years in India when I met him. Some of our bigoted Brahmins claim smugly that Westerners will never be able to succeed at our sadhanas perfectly, but that is all bull. Westerners actually have some qualities that have become rare in Indians nowadays. For example, they are thorough in whatever they do. This sadhu, named Musth Ram (literally “Intoxicated with Rama”), was as perfect a sadhu as you will ever find. When I met him, he had injured his leg and the wound was full of pus and maggots. Yes, maggots. I felt sorry for him. I was sure he must be suffering some disturbance in his meditation on that account, so I volunteered to cure him.

“Oh, no, no, don’t bother,” he told me in elegant English, “why disturb them? Let them eat, let them eat.” Can you imagine? Would you be able to say the same thing if it were your leg that was being devoured by maggots? I doubt it; not in the beginning, at least. Which is why I tell the people who come to me, “If you cannot concentrate properly in Bombay where you have all the facilities, food whenever

you want it, a comfortable bed, and so on, how could you possibly concentrate out in the jungle with mosquitoes swooping down at you at odd hours, with a rock for a bed, and whatever you can beg for your dinner?"

I never wanted to leave Girnar, but I can see now it was the right thing to do. I've learned so much about the world and the people who live in it. I can understand how they can be miserable, and I try to help them out of their misery, physical or mental, so that they can, maybe, remember God occasionally. I love to play about with my "children", to teach them new things, and to help them overcome their bad habits. One day one of them may even develop sufficiently to be fit to become a disciple. One of my American "children" told me once, very sweetly and sincerely, "I am really proud to be able to say I know you, and I am so glad that I can love you and that you reciprocate my love, that it is mutual. I just hope my love is not a burden to you."

Wasn't that a nice thing to say? But very naive.

I told him, "Your love is no burden to me because it is a very inconstant love. You love me some of the time, your wife some of the time, your other friends part of the time, and some of the time you are overcome by self-doubt and are not sure who you love or even if you do love. If your love ever becomes real love, then it will definitely be a burden to me, because then I will have to work hard to live up to it."

The purpose of sadhana is to develop real love. But nowadays it is so difficult to do proper sadhana because of all the obstacles. The secret is to be sincere about whatever it is you take as your sadhana, no matter how insignificant or unimportant it may seem to you. God is not interested in big sadhus or saints; God is interested only in sincerity. That is why Krishna cannot do without Radha. She can remember nothing else except Krishna, and Her remembrance drags Him to Her.

When Kinaram Aghori cured that dancer of leprosy, or when the sadhu in Girnar cured that Bombay girl of leprosy, the love that Kinaram and the Baba showed was infinitely greater than any love you have ever experienced in your life. Why? Because first, it was done knowing full well that the opposite party would never be able to repay such a gift. Normally lovers work on the principle that "a fair exchange is no robbery." A lover loves his or her partner only because he or she is confident that the partner will return that love. How many people love without any expectation of return? Secondly, it was a love which was so great that Kinaramji and the sadhu were willing to suffer for the opposite party. It is one thing to love without any expectation of return; it is a very different thing to love with the

intention of suffering in the other's stead. Sometimes you will find mothers who can do it, especially animal mothers protecting their young. This is why I am always desirous of sitting in the lap of the Mother, so that I can always be learning how to love. This is real love, and this love is a real burden.

Where did this love come from? Did Kinaramji want to enjoy sex with the dancer? Did the sadhu look at the young lady's body before agreeing to cure her? No. Ordinary love for the flesh can never go so deep because of the instinct of self-preservation. This was love directed inward to the Atman, the fragment of the Universal Soul which dwells in everyone. Overwhelming love for God made these things happen. That sadhu, and Kinaramji likewise, thought, "Wah, Lord, are you suffering? Let me relieve you!" Real love changes things.

Generally, people say the aim of life is moksha, by which they mean freedom from being obliged to take birth again on Earth. But I believe in a personal God and I say to Him, "Lord, let me be born over and over again thousands of times, but don't take your face away from me. Make me a blind leper for centuries but never desert me. Always keep me in your heart and in your eyes." My Beloved loves to play about with me and I love to play about with Him, and the result is emotional highlights: Mahabhava Samadhi! Can you prevent two lovers from meeting? No, even if they have to meet in the road or in some public area where everyone can see what they are up to. Do they have any sense of time or place? No! *Kamaturanam na bhayam na lajja*: "Fear and shame do not exist for those afflicted with the disease of desire". And bhakti is far more intense than physical love. Two souls merge into one another; can anyone describe it? To achieve it you must forget the external completely and go deeper and deeper within.

So: Go on with your sadhana, longer and longer until you can't live without your deity, and He or She can't live without you. Then go further; go so deep that you forget even the deity. The deity then will feel so miserable without your love and remembrance that He or She will run after you and demand worship. This becomes such a bondage of love that you can't escape it. You become lost, absolutely lost, useless to the world, lost within yourself playing with your Beloved.

And when that happens, your perspective on life will undergo a radical change. You'll see things completely differently, because you are no longer part of the usual current of worldly events, so your priorities will be determined by your bhakti. Here is an example. Once in the South there was a king of the Chola dynasty who was a great devotee of Rama. One day while the court bard was reciting the *Ramayana* (the epic of Rama's life and adventures) aloud to him, the narrative reached the point where Sita was taken to Lanka. The king suddenly jumped up and said, "Immediately prepare our forces for an

attack on Lanka. Why should Lord Rama worry when I am here to serve him? I will see that Sita is returned!"

No one at the court had the courage to tell him that all this had happened long before. So he sailed at the head of his fleet and duly conquered Lanka. Then he ordered his generals, "Find Sita!" Since they were aware that to refuse a royal order meant death, they made a show of searching and reported that no Sita was present. This mystified the king, who was on the point of losing his temper, until it came out in the course of a conversation that the *Ramayana* had happened thousands of years ago. Then he realized, "Oh, no! What have I done? I have unnecessarily conquered Lanka!" He gave the kingdom of Lanka to one of his sons, his own kingdom to the other, and went out into the forest to live the life of an ascetic. He became a great saint. Devotion like that will always pay dividends.

When you have achieved real bhakti, your attitude to life becomes quite different. Once Narada (an immortal devotee of Vishnu) asked Vishnu to explain to him the difference between a yogi and a bhakta, a devotee, a follower of the path of bhakti. Vishnu told Narada to follow him down to Earth. As they strolled along on Earth, they came upon a yogi hanging upside down from the branch of a large tree. The yogi asked Vishnu, "How many more births will I have to take to be free of the cycle of birth and death? My penance is so terrific that I should achieve very soon."

Vishnu replied, "In spite of all your penance there is still a little left for you to do. You will have to take two more births yet."

On hearing this the yogi got down out of the tree and walked off in disgust, saying, "In spite of all my strenuous efforts and austerities I will still have to take two more births? What sort of justice is that? Forget it; there is no use in continuing."

Narada and Vishnu walked silently on a little farther and saw a devotee singing and dancing by himself under a spreading banyan tree. Seeing Vishnu, the devotee prostrated himself fully on the ground and said, "Oh, my blessed Lord, how kind of You to come and visit me! How wonderful that I have been permitted to see You! Would You be kind enough to tell me how many more times I will have to take birth before I can be free of the wheel of existence?"

Vishnu replied, "I am sorry to have to tell you this, but you will have to take birth again as many times as there are leaves on this tree."

The devotee shouted for joy, "Only so many times? And I feared there might be no limit. The time will pass almost unnoticed." And he began to sing and dance again.

Vishnu smiled and said, "Oh, is that the way you feel about it? Then come with me right now!"

Then Vishnu asked Narada, “Now do you see the difference between a yogi and a bhakta? Yogis still try to hold on to their egos, and what do they get? Devotees accomplish great things by offering up their egos to the Beloved.”

There is a cliff in Girnar. When a sadhu has done penances for years and years and has finally despaired of life and can no longer stand to live without his deity, he will walk to that cliff and throw himself off in a frenzy of anguish—and nothing will happen to him. He will have passed his test and becomes eligible to be taught further. False sadhus have tried it, to attract attention to themselves, and all of them died. True devotion is the only force which can go beyond death.

When you get close to your Beloved there comes a time when you cannot continue to exist separately, and your own personality is lost in that of the deity. Each deity has unique characteristics which give a wonderful flavor to the play. When you embrace Anjaneya, it is as if electricity had been given to all parts of your body. All the cells begin to jump and sing. And what is so marvelous is that in the blood, for instance, if the white blood cells are too many and red blood cells too few, or vice versa, they will automatically go back to their proper levels. In the brain every cell is dilated, every blood vessel is dilated. And that is why they call it Supreme Bliss.

Anyone who follows the path of devotion wants to get the vision of his deity because he is dying to catch a glimpse of his Beloved. He longs for his deity so much that the form of the deity is actually created in the astral body, and then it projects and plays with him. All through this process he experiences the joys of intense emotional highlights. This explains why aghoris are always the best devotees, because they forget everything else when they remember the Beloved. Their longing is so intense that they cry, wail, tear their flesh, starve themselves, anything to lose their physical consciousness and attract the deity. An ordinary devotee can never be so intense as an aghori.

Once an aghori told his disciple, “Take this pot and fill it with water, but don’t go near any lake or river.”

The disciple thought to himself as hard as he could, and then he wandered around awhile before returning with an empty pot. The guru looked up at him and said, “There is only one way to fill this pot: with your tears. When you love your deity so much that you cannot bear to be without Him, that you cannot exist unless you have a glimpse of Him, that you are ready to kill yourself unless He shows Himself to you, and when you cry continuously until the pot is full, then only are you fit to do Aghora sadhanas; not until then.”

Another day the guru told the same disciple, “Build me a fire without wood.” The disciple made an effort, but to no avail. When he

confessed his failure to the guru, the latter shook his head and said, "Until your heart catches fire with the intense longing for your deity, until you burn yourself to ashes and continue to burn even then, until you become flame yourself, you can never succeed at Aghora."

The scriptures describe the stages through which one passes when overcome by bhakti. First, you must forget your body. If you worry about your body, how will you concentrate on your Beloved? Once you can no longer remember your body you are on the way. Then you begin to sweat as the emotion builds up. Next you cry. First you cry because of the separation, and later you cry because of anticipation, out of joy when you feel the deity is really going to come to you. When the deity enters your body and embraces you, you begin to tremble and shake because of the overwhelming bliss of the embrace. And then you lose yourself in the fusion of the two personalities into one. If you are a super aghori you maintain this state permanently; if not, you can develop the emotion whenever you please and play with your Beloved at any time. Then you are beyond all the limitations of your physical body, and therefore of karma and fate as well.

Once the great Hindi poet-saint Tulsidas, during his period as a wandering sadhu, came to a certain town, where a lady offered him food. In India we always believe in feeding sadhus, birds, animals, all living things, because you never know when God is going to come to you. God may come in any form, and we feel that if we feed everyone, eventually we will feed God and our work will be done. After eating, Tulsidas told the lady, "Please ask for anything, and I will do it for you."

She laughed in his face and said, "Maharaj, plenty of saints have come and none of them have been able to give me what I want."

"But I am Tulsidas," he said, a little offended, "and I will give you what you desire; just speak it."

The woman sighed and replied, "I want a son."

Tulsidas went into meditation and after a few minutes came back to earthly consciousness and said, "Ma, I'm afraid that a son is not in your destiny."

The woman smiled and said, "That is what I told you in the first place, but you wouldn't listen to me. However, you are always welcome for food." Tulsidas went on his way.

Later an aghori came to the town, and upon learning about the lady who was unable to have a child, he decided to do something about it. One day he walked down the street in front of the lady's house, shouting, "Who will feed me? I am offering a child for every *roti*[1] I am fed! One roti, one child! Ten rotis, ten children!" When the lady heard this, she invited the aghori inside and told him, "But Maharaj, it's not in my destiny to have children." The aghori replied,

“I piss on destiny!” She fed him eight rotis, and in eight years she delivered eight handsome sons.

After twelve years Tulsidas again visited the town. As he walked down the same street he saw the eight boys and was immediately enamored by their beauty and intelligence. They called their mother, and she invited him inside and told him, “Do you remember that you said I had no sons in my destiny?”

When Tulsidas heard that the aghori had given them to her he went into meditation to ask Rama about it. He said, “Raghuvira, when you would not allow me to give this lady sons, how could that filthy evil-smelling aghori do it?”

Rama smiled at him and said, “Tulsi, that aghori is something different from you. He has gone beyond the limits of being a saint and living in sattva.”

Then Rama decided to teach Tulsidas a good lesson with the help of the aghori, and suddenly He started to shout, “Oh, I have a terrific pain in the heart. Please, Tulsi, get me a heart from someone so that I can get some relief.”

Tulsidas got scared: If something were to happen to Lord Rama what would be his fate as Rama’s chief devotee? So, he ran out into the street shouting, “A heart! Lord Rama needs a heart! Who will give his heart for Rama?”

The aghori, who was relaxing under a tree, heard him and said, “Tulsidas, come here.” When Tulsidas came, the aghori said, “Now I know how much love you have for Lord Rama. If you really loved Him, you would have given your own heart instantaneously when He asked. Here, if Lord Rama wants a heart, let Him take mine,” and so saying he ripped open his chest with his fingers, tore out his heart, and handed it to Tulsidas.

When Tulsidas went back into meditation to offer the heart to Rama, Rama smiled at him and said, “Now do you see how a real lover behaves with his Beloved?” And Tulsidas had to keep quiet and acknowledge the aghori’s greatness.

Once when I was in Girnar I was moving about with a sadhu named Ganga Das, a great devotee of Anjaneya. He had gone to a temple of Anjaneya to worship, but the priest told us, “You naked sadhus, get out of here! The wives of some important merchants from Bombay are coming here to worship. They will be embarrassed to see you!” And he refused to let us into the temple.

Tears filled the eyes of Ganga Das, and all he said was, “Wah, Anjaneya—I could never have believed You would feel embarrassed to see me. Doesn’t matter; I am ready to go.” And we turned to leave.

As we left the temple enclosure the image of Anjaneya ripped itself

from the wall and began to follow us! We walked on and on and it followed us faithfully all the while, the priest standing thunderstruck behind. I don't know how many miles we covered but eventually Ganga Das relented and turned to worship the image. The image never returned to the original temple; the trustees arranged for a new temple to be built over it where it finally came to rest.

This is just an example of what I mean when I say that when you really get close to your deity, He or She cannot do without you and will go to any lengths not to offend you. There is a beautiful bondage of love. But only an aghori can ever reach such heights; others are just too timid.

You can't just go out and try to develop love like this; it takes years. But everyone can make a beginning. Every morning when I wake up I do three things. First, I remember that I'm going to die. This gives urgency to the way I will live that day. Second, I spend five minutes in thanksgiving to Nature for being permitted to live, to have this chance to experience, to learn, and to achieve. And third, I resolve not to cheat my consciousness during the day. So long as I don't cheat my consciousness nothing I do during the day can stain me, but if I do something wrong, I know I am likely to end up like the boy whose guru swallowed the fish and then regurgitated them back up, alive.

There are several little things like this I do during the day, just to keep my mind under control. I always make it a point to eat a green chili or two each morning, first thing. And you know how hot green chilies are! It is to remind me of the time when I had only chilies and water to eat all day long, because of my sadhana. That morning chili tells me, "Forget not, forget not."And there is a practice which I follow every night before going to sleep. It is very simple, but it has helped me immensely, and it can help anyone who uses it. It involves only three questions: Have I lived? Have I loved? Have I laughed?

Have I lived? Have I made the best use of the time provided me during that day to grow, to learn, to develop?

Have I loved? Have I reached out to everyone I met and made them aware of the love in my heart and eased their burdens of self-mistrust and self-doubt?

Have I laughed? Have I seen the humorous side of even the most painful incident?

If the answer to any one of these questions is no, then it is a matter for remorse. One more day has passed, and I am another day closer to my death, but I have not exerted myself to my fullest potential. This is enough to make me work harder the next day and try to make amends, before Mahakala comes and catches me unawares. It is this intense desperation to live life to the fullest which is the hallmark, the stamp, of a true aghori.

[1] Generic word for an unyeasted flat bread, made of any grain; a wheat chappati is one type of roti.